

Over  
Grass  
Grown  
Trails

By  
H. G.  
SHEDD



To

Caroline

From

Harry Shedd





OVER GRASS-GROWN  
TRAILS



## KIOTE BOOKS

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# Over Grass-Grown Trails

HARRY GRAVES SHEDD



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By HARRY GRAVES SHEDD



This, then, is a little book of Western  
Stories by Harry Graves Shedd, of  
which five hundred were printed, and  
the number of this volume is

206.

*H. G. Shedd.*



# TO MY MOTHER

Lincoln, Nebraska

April, 1900





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# AFTER TEN YEARS







## AFTER TEN YEARS

### I

**A**T the sound of a distant whistle, four men, a woman in black, and a boy in knickerbockers came out of the little station and stood huddling like sheep against the whirling snow that was whipped across the tracks and lined in banks against the building.

"Not more'n two hours late, and that's pretty good for a toy engine buckin' this snow up from the river. The superintendent ought to know better—ought to extend the time in winter."

The bus-driver spoke and drew his little thin face deeper into his upturned collar, until his thin bunch of chin-whiskers stood out straight like a squirrel's brush.

"Expecting anybody in to-night?" asked one of the men.

"No. Nobody gone away for two days.

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days. Business in my line thriving now like a sody-fountain."

The train, wheezing and choking, and shooting forth intermittent puffs of yellow light from the smokestack, approached the station.

"Traveling east, kid?" one of the men asked of the boy.

"Hain't got my trunk, have I?" was the response.

The train stopped. The woman in black stepped forward toward the steps of the car, but the brakeman held her back a moment while an elderly man in a long gray ulster stepped down. In the light from the car-windows the four men recognized him. The gray hair, the clean-shaven face, the firm, close-set lips, with an unlighted cigar stuck "wrong-end-to" between them, were unmistakable.

"Rockwell—by God!" one of them said half aloud, and all four drew back closer to the shadow of the building. As the stranger came nearer the bus, the driver edged toward him reluctantly and opened the door.

"White's or The Clifton?" the driver asked.

"Which was the old Holden House? White's? Thank you; I didn't know they'd

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they'd changed names. It isn't too late for supper, I suppose?"

"No. Always wait for this train at White's."

As the driver spoke and was closing the door, the stranger stopped him.

"Hold on there. Here's my check—a small brown valise, rather old. And, I say, isn't this Jim Powers? Why, of course you are. How are you, anyway? Remember me?"

"Yes," answered Powers, surlily, looking away; and then under his breath, "Damned few don't—and no good of you, either."

"Well, you haven't changed much since I left. Have a cigar?"

The driver took the weed and put it carefully into his outside pocket.

"Come on, boy," he called; and the two climbed to the box, and the vehicle rattled along the frozen road, over the bridge spanning the dark little stream below, across the bottoms where the town had been in the early days, and up the higher land to the residence portion of the place.

"Say, Jim," asked the boy finally, looking up at the man beside him, "who's that inside?"

"That? That's Rockwell. Left here 'bout

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'bout ten years ago. Your dad knows him well enough—too well, perhaps. Ask him. Git up there, Barney, you plague-goned, knock-kneed, tumble-down old heifer. Him? Why, kid, that man hasn't a friend in this whole town. Hasn't dared to show his face here for ten years. He's the man that—but here we are, kid. More lively now! It's damnation cold."

Before a large brick house set well in among evergreens, and from the windows of which lights shone out brightly through the falling snow, the bus stopped and the boy let himself down.

"Just tell your old man about him," beckoning with his thumb. "He'll be glad to know it—oh, I bet he will."

The boy stood still in the storm until the lumbering coach had quite disappeared from sight, and then went into the house. Boy-fashion, he burst, snow-covered, into the sitting-room, where his father sat smoking before the grate. At the man's unsmiling face he stopped short.

"Well?" said the father, coldly.

"Rockwell's come back," he blurted out.

"What!" The man's cold, steely eyes



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eyes were upon the boy, who drew back to the door.

"Rockwell's come back—Jim Powers said it was him—told me to tell you."

The man's gaze left the boy, and getting up he walked back and forth before the grate like a startled tiger. Looking up after a moment he saw the boy still standing by the door.

"Oh, are you here yet? You go to bed."

William A. Davidson, Jr., President of the James County Savings Bank and Manager of the Western Loan and Building Association, continued to walk the floor. All through the night he paced back and forth, or threw himself into his chair, to rise and pace again, and the next morning Sarah, the dining-room girl, reported to the cook that the master was up uncommon early for him.

## II

**R**OCKWELL had a scheme that filled his head, a plan that meant much to his native town, he felt, if the town would accept it, and he planned to take his project direct to the leading citizen of the place—the President of the James County Savings Bank and the Manager of the Western Loan and Trust Company. After breakfast he went over to the bank, and found the young man who acted jointly as janitor and bookkeeper just opening the doors for business.

“He should be in now,” was the reply of the young man to Rockwell’s question. “He’s generally down as soon as we open up, sometimes ahead of Albers.”

Albers was a new name to Rockwell, and he put it down to the cashier. And when an oldish young man, with shrewd, nervous eyes and long hairy hands, came in and went behind the iron grating, his face was also unknown to him.

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"Anything I can do for you this morning?" the cashier asked of Rockwell, who had backed up against the public writing-board attached to the wall.

"I'm waiting for Mr. Davidson merely."

"Then step into his office. He'll be here soon."

Rockwell took off his overcoat and hat and entered the den-like corner, hedged off from the rest of the inclosure as well as the outer office, and yet commanding a view of the whole room. He dropped into an easy-chair and looked about him. During his absence change had worked slowly there. The dark-brown wallpaper was dingier and dirtier, a new fire-insurance picture hung against the west wall; a bit of new carpet had been tacked on the floor of this little office, and a low sash-curtain was stretched across the windowpane. There was a glass panel in the door he had entered, and across it the word "Private."

The main street, typifying the town, showed no alterations, except those of age. The same monotonous row of frame store-buildings lined the opposite side, some with wooden porches con-

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taining rusty - looking barrels and weather-stained boxes, some with large painted signs, and some without. A few were tenantless. At the end of the block stood the barn-like brick Opera House, with its torn blue curtains in the upper windows, frowning down upon the muddy, slushy street below, where drooping horses plodded wearily, drawing rickety spring-wagons, and driven by slouching, rough-clad men. But sordid and monotonous and uninviting as it all appeared, the scene brought to the man gazing from the bank window a feeling of rest and home-content unknown for years.

Davidson entered the bank. He nodded to the cashier and the boy, and turned toward his private office. He stopped short and suddenly went white about the lips.

"Oh, Rockwell? How are you?" he said, quickly recovering himself. "How are you, anyway? I heard you were here. My son saw you get off the train last night. But I had not expected you over here so early. So you see it's a surprise you've given me, after all. Where are you putting up? White's? Good place, and Melton, the proprietor, does his business with us. So sorry we  
20 can't

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can't entertain you during your visit, but Mrs. Davidson is away—gone down to her sister's at the Forks for a week. You see how it is."

"That's all right, Davidson," Rockwell replied, hastily; "I'm not here visiting this time. Say, I have your chair. Take it and I'll sit over here. This feels more like the one I had ten years ago. I always liked the straight ones best, you know. You haven't changed things much about, I see."

"No, times have been too hard for much internal improvement. Just beginning to get on our feet again now," the President replied, hedgingly. "But what's brought you back here now? Since you say you are not visiting, you arouse my curiosity."

The two men faced about so as to meet each other squarely. Rockwell sat straight in his chair, while Davidson leaned back easily and watched him with narrowed eyes.

"Well, it's this. I've a thing here that'll put me on my feet again, and make big money for every man that goes into it. I've been working it out in my head ever since I went away, ten years ago. It's been buzzing round in my brain longer'n that—in fact, since I



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came West and found out about this particular piece of land. You know the place—out at Hendry's farm, six miles west. A year or so before the crash came I looked into it pretty carefully. I had the ponds examined and the soil analyzed by a chemist, and it's all right for what I want to do. I want your help to start me."

"Well, go ahead, Rockwell. Tell me all about it. It sounds good so far."

"It's simply this," began the older man, drawing his chair nearer, dropping his hat on the floor, and leaning forward, with his hands on his knees. He talked slowly, with the ease and confidence of a man who has every detail of his project well in hand, demonstrating the absolute success of the undertaking and the fortune awaiting its projectors. The plan had been worked out with mature judgment and after careful investigation, and shrewd and cautious as he was, the banker could find no flaw in it. His trained business mind grasped every point in the plan, and he admired its conception.

Yet William A. Davidson, Jr., the banker, was surprised. He had not expected this from Rockwell, but a far different thing. His mind traveled back

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to certain transactions that had passed between the two ten years before. He had made some promises to Rockwell, and then Rockwell had gone away with the wrath of the town heavy upon him. Hatred was too mild a word with which to characterize that wrath. Those promises Davidson had not fulfilled. Those first years he had been strained to every nerve with the reorganization of the bank, and then later he had been busy with the formation of his loan and trust company, so that gradually his unfulfilled pledges had been pushed farther and farther back into the deep recesses of his conscience. There they had lain until so rudely jarred by his son's unexpected words of the night before.

Quite a different thing, then, had he expected than this quiet, gentlemanly explanation of a promoter's scheme. While he had walked his sitting-room during the small hours of that morning he had pictured a scene with a far more stormy setting. He had thought that Rockwell had returned to make certain claims upon him, and now he was amazed at the apparent childishness of the man before him. Had their positions been reversed, how differently he

23 would

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would have managed the thing, how speedily he would have settled accounts. Then he saw that he had been tricked by his memory and its sudden awakening into a false estimate of his former friend's nerve. Really he had nothing to fear in this dreamer, so weak, so undevoted to action. He might have known it from the easy way in which Rockwell had accepted his proposition ten years ago, had played the wheel of fortune into his hands, and had gone away and lived as one dead to the town.

Rockwell talked on, but the banker heard little of it. His thoughts were tumbling over each other along another bent. Why not beat this dream-fool at his own play? The project was good. There were thousands in it certainly. Why not reap them himself? Dame Fortune was his mistress now. She had deserted the other man ten years before.

Rockwell still continued quietly, persuasively. Yes, he could do it, Davidson thought, and so simply too. The town was at his beck and call. The merchants and the wealthy farmers of the locality followed him in matters financial. He knew every pulse-beat of  
24 their

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their business, every venture they made, almost their very thought. Then, too, he knew well that the old sentiment of ten years ago against Rockwell had not died out. It still slumbered. The people forget slowly. They might not attempt again to mob the man, but they would have nothing to do with him unless the bank willed it. He had simply to wait, to play the line in and out, until the other was exhausted. A smile of evil joy swept over his face.

Rockwell had ceased, and was looking at the street.

"Yes? And how will you raise the money?" asked the President of the bank.

"By sale of stock," replied Rockwell with confidence; "shares of ten dollars each. I intend to raise all the money right here in town. Not a cent of the profit need go out of the place."

"It's a good idea, Rockwell," replied the bank President, "a capital idea, and at first thought I favor it; but I want time to think it over, for it's too big a deal to take all in a jump. Now, you must go and see the other fellows. Take it easy, one at a time, and make each one keep it dark a few days until you've sounded 'em all. Come in to-morrow



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to-morrow, and we'll talk it over again."

"Yes, I'll come in again," said Rockwell, slowly, taking his hat from the floor; "I have lots to say yet—a great deal, indeed."

The bank President did not go to the door with him, as would have been natural with an old friend, but bowed him out of the private office, and then smiled to himself as the older man went down the steps. Rockwell had aged greatly since he went away, he thought; and he smiled again in a satisfied way.

"Albers," he said, turning to the cashier, "Albers, I want you to write to Fraser at once asking for an abstract of the Hendry lands—that part with the ponds and lakes on it—and then after the office closes this afternoon ride out and buy an option on its purchase, but not to exceed five hundred dollars. Let me know the first thing in the morning how you come out."

Davidson sat down before his desk and gazed at the calendar-pad absently.

"Yes, yes," he said, tapping his fingers on the top of the desk, "that must be the land. When I was a boy there was 'keel' in the old cave. And,  
26 yes,



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yes, I remember I saw Rockwell poking around there one Sunday, jabbing the clay with his cane. That must be the place. It's the only place large enough to work on such a scale as he proposes."

Davidson then called the young bookkeeper to him.

"William, go 'round to the officers of the bank and the directors of the company, and tell them there will be a call meeting—important, too—at eleven. Get every one of 'em. D'you hear?"

Like a rumor of evil tidings, Rockwell's presence had preceded him, and from every business man who had been his friend in the old days before the trouble he received a chilly greeting. Their labored efforts to conceal their feelings for him, their distrust and incivility, were equally humorous and disgusting. He told each his plan, not following the banker's suggestion, but putting it fair and square. The answers were all the same, all indefinite, each listener apparently interested, but postponing final decision.

"Too big a thing to handle at one toss," replied Morton, the lawyer; "push me hard to get the money right now, too, but I'll think it over."

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"Let you know in a day or two," said Greigh, the leading dry-goods merchant. "You couldn't have hit me at a harder time of the year. The thing seems all O. K. though, and if I go in I guess I can raise the cash somewhere."

"Not by a damned sight. I don't want to hear about it at all, not at all," was the reply of the real estate dealer, who abruptly left Rockwell standing in the street.

"Got Davidson?" asked a farmer who managed to live in town the year around from the rent of six farms. "You haven't? Well, just you get him first. I don't go in anything else he's there. You can bet your life away on that."

Rockwell left the farmer and climbed to the office of a leading doctor of the town, a large man with a florid nose and a fragrant breath, and began to explain his plan.

"Now, Mr. Rockwell," put in the doctor quickly, "you step right out of here, please. I don't care to listen to you. I listened to you once, sir, and I'd a lost every cent if I hadn't taken fifty per cent from Davidson. No, sir; I want nothing to do with you or your likes."

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Rockwell tried no more that forenoon, but went back to the hotel for his dinner. Then, after smoking a cigar, he paid a visit to one other man, Thomas Grimby, editor and publisher of the local paper, The Weekly Times. As Rockwell entered, Grimby arose, and wiping his hands on his trousers, took off his green eye-shade.

"Glad to see you, Rockwell," he said heartily, wringing the other's hand, Rockwell's first true welcome that day. "Here, sit over in this chair. I'm all cramped up, and want to lean against something and give my legs a chance to even up again.

When Rockwell began to tell his errand the other stopped him by a wave of the hand.

"Heard all about it. We talked it over at the bank-meeting this morning. Davidson called us together on purpose. He talked in favor of it, and yet he said it wouldn't do to take the lead. Thought we ought to wait and see how you came out. He said he wasn't sure the people had confidence in you. Wanted to wait and find out. Was afraid they wouldn't trust a man who had pretty nearly ruined them once. Said a burnt child didn't monkey with  
the

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the fire more'n once, you know, and all that sort of rot."

"Did he say that?" asked Rockwell, quickly.

"Yes. Then I said a few things to set you right, but it didn't work. They were all against you from the start, every son of a gun. I didn't like Davidson's way of putting it, for I could see that your scheme's a spanker and a big thing for every mother's son in this end of the county. I don't mind saying to you, either, that there's little love lost 'tween Davidson and me, for I don't like some of his ways of conducting business, and he knows it. I'm new on the board, you know, but I'm catching on rather fast for my age, and if things aren't being run right in there, I'll make people know it if I bust The Times a-telling them."

Rockwell smiled, and the editor went on.

"I'm with you. I haven't forgotten some things you did for me when I was starting here, and the way you carried me against odds for a year and a half. I've made some money, and I'll sign for a hundred shares now, and perhaps more a little later on. And, remember,


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The Times is yours for booming this thing just as much as you please."

"Thank you, Grimby," replied Rockwell, arising to go; "I'll bring in my first copy to-morrow afternoon. It will be something about this new enterprise, or a story about a certain bank ten years ago. It will be interesting reading, whatever it is."



### III

BOUT six o'clock the next morning Rockwell arose, and in the morning starlight drove out to Hendry's place and had a talk with the farmer. He then drove back to town in time for breakfast, and the morning meal finished, stood in the hotel window, smoking and looking out upon the street, where the snow was falling again.

The bank across the way was not yet opened. The doors were closed, the curtains down, but Rockwell saw the President coming down the side street. Throwing away his cigar-stump, the promoter pulled on his overcoat, from which the ends of two legal-looking papers protruded, and walked across to meet him.

"I thought you'd be down early," the older man said; "you always were the first; and I want to talk with you before anybody comes in and disturbs us."

Surprise struggled in the other's

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eyes, but he led the way into the bank, closed and locked the door after them, and then turned toward the private office.

"No," said Rockwell, quietly, "we'll go into the back room. The others coming in won't interrupt us there."

Davidson stopped short, distrust openly written on his face.

"What does all this mean? What's there so secret about it?"

"I have a good many things to say, and I don't want anybody to hear but you."

Rockwell's voice was calm, clear, and cheerful, and he smiled openly and pleasantly; but a sickening fear, a presentiment of approaching evil, crept into the banker's heart. He could not refuse the request, and the two men went into the back room set aside for directors' meetings and very private business. It was a bare room, with two or three chairs, a leather lounge, and a table in the center, on which were scattered a few blank notes and some pens and blotting-pads.

"Well, Rockwell, how's it going?"

Davidson had resumed his usual manner again. He seated himself and leaned back in the chair, his hands in

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his pockets, his eyes watching the other narrowly. Rockwell took off his overcoat and placed it on the table. The ends of the papers protruded from the pocket on the upper side.

"I am not making progress rapidly, though I think I shall after to-day. Everybody seems afraid of the business and waiting on somebody else. They all admit it's a good thing enough, but are afraid to venture. Perhaps they are afraid of me. It wasn't that way in the old days."

The speaker turned to the window a moment, and a little smile stole across Davidson's face.

"Yes, they are skittish now," he answered. "You see, when we first came out here the country was new, and we were all like young colts, dead anxious to have a 'go' at anything that promised well. The 'hard times' have dampened us a little, made us more cautious and careful. I saw that clearly yesterday when I incidentally put your project before the officers of the bank. All of them but Grimby wanted to wait and investigate and see what the town would do, but I hope to bring 'em 'round shortly, for it's a great thing. When the time comes you can count on me."

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"But the time's right now, and I need your name on the paper to start the ball going."

"Yes, yes, I see," replied Davidson; "but I can't do anything until the directors make a decision. You know how that is yourself—how the head of an institution by personally doing such a thing runs the risk of involving the whole bank. I can't do that."

Rockwell sat quite still, with so intense a gaze upon the other that Davidson could not meet it.

"You'll have to nurse 'em along a little," Davidson went on, lamely, with averted eyes; "you can't do this thing in a rush. It will take us a week to work it up. You keep after the merchants. I'll prod up the officers of the bank. We can make it a success, I'm sure, you and I together."

"No, sir, Davidson," Rockwell answered, emphatically. "This is all my scheme, my own, and nobody gets in on it except for stock. I want that understood distinctly."

Silence fell upon the two. Rockwell kept his eyes fixed upon the other, who straightened up and moved nervously about in his chair.

"I suppose you have an option on  
the

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the land?" Davidson asked, as if to relieve the embarrassment.

"Why do you ask that?" Rockwell did not know that the cashier had not yet reported to the bank President of his visit to the Hendry lands.

"It would be the natural thing to do. Somebody might gobble up the land and do the same thing with it that you propose."

"Yes," said Rockwell, slowly; and from the agitation in his voice the other could feel the speaker's effort to control himself. "Yes, that's true. Fortunately, I thought of that long ago, and have had an option upon it for years. One man I told my scheme to has tried that sort of thing—just one. He went back on me—just one."

Rockwell ceased, but Davidson could not ask the question.

"Just one man who lives right here in this town and whom I made. He is the only man capable of such a cowardly, sneaking deed. You know the cur; you know him well. -His name is William A. Davidson, Jr., and he tried to get hold of the land last night."

Davidson's whole face went white, and his jaw hung loose and nerveless.



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All the fury of Rockwells' subdued nature broke loose.

"You tried it yesterday after I left you. You sent Albers out there. Hendry told me this morning. You can't deny that. What's more, you have set the bank officers against me. I know your scheme. You want to freeze me out. I could read your mind during all my talk yesterday. Don't you think I know you? I knew you pretty well when I went away, but I know you better now, a heap better. Don't you think I've counted on this a little? Why, man, you're as easy to see through as a child. I've met propositions a damned sight harder than you. You're like a sieve. I know your hold on the town, for I had it myself once. But I wanted to try 'em first. I wanted to see if my being president of this bank for fifteen years would make any difference. But it don't. This thing means thousands to this place. But primarily I don't care a continental about that. It's to put me on my feet again, right here in this town that I left ten years ago. And you're going to give the first boost by taking a thousand shares of stock!"

Davidson was up now, his fingers  
working

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working nervously, an evil light in his green eyes.

"Oh, yes, I am," he said, in a shrill voice. "Not if I know myself. I would have helped you in time, but not now. I'll see you in hell's fire first. Yes, I have a hold on the place. You'll never get a cent if I can help it. You'll find me bucking you at every move, dogging every step you take. You can't squeeze me."

"Well, we'll see about that. Davidson, sit down. I have some other things to say yet." Rockwell was calm again, and he drew the two papers from the overcoat pocket.

"Ten years ago, you will remember, I was president of this bank, and you were cashier. At your urgent request I invested for you ten thousand dollars of your wife's money. I didn't want to do it, but you begged so hard I couldn't refuse. Then the crash came. There is no need to go into details. You remember all about that. We were sound enough if we had had time to realize upon our paper, but that Omaha bank tied us tight. We were temporarily paralyzed, and—well, there were a few days of that week that aged us like years. We saw men crazed like wild  
38 beasts,

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beasts, frantic and mad. You couldn't reason with a mother's son of 'em. The picture of that howling mob of men and women before the bank, beating in the doors and hurling stones through the windows, has never left me. They were the very men I had carried for years. But they were angels compared with you! Wrought up as I was, you came to me that night, and brought your wife. We came back into this room, and you both broke down about your money, and cried like children, and made a tolerably bad muss of it all 'round. I said I could save it if you'd give me time, but you would not do it. You twisted me hard then. I had no family, and you had, and for their sakes I gave in. I made over my interests to you, and asked that you be made receiver of the bank. It was a great opportunity for you. The bank was sound enough, God knows. The town was good, too—no boom about it. In two years you had things straightened out. In three more you formed your Loan and Trust company. Oh, it was a great thing for you!"

Rockwell stopped. He was standing by the table. Davidson had arisen, pale and trembling, passion and fear struggling in his face.

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"Well," that's all true," he said, hoarsely. "What of it? That was ten years ago."

"What of it? Simply this; I don't know how clean you've been in the bank affairs. I don't care. I'm out of that. That night you made me a promise. There was nothing in writing, for I had faith in you then. You promised me if things turned out well to pay me ten thousand dollars for my share of the business. Have you paid it? No. There's no going to law; for that wouldn't do any good. The whole town's against me; yes, the whole county and the whole state's against the men who were bankers then. We're like lepers. I've found only one friend here, Grimby, and he's with me to the finish. Now, I've come back for that ten thousand dollars, and propose to get it. I give you a chance to make a profit on the money, but I want you to sign for that stock in this mineral paint scheme. You'll start me in this thing to make up for what you have done to me in all these years."

Davidson felt the vise. Perspiration stood out upon his forehead and his upper lip. He had slipped down into the chair again, weak and limp.

"You'll sign this paper, and head the  
list,



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list, or I'll take this other paper, which tells the whole story, to Grimby. It would make pretty interesting reading, wouldn't it? Yes, ten thousand dollars, the amount you promised me, and I'm not even asking interest."

"You'll leave me alone then—always?" was the craven question of the banker.

"Yes," answered Rockwell, contemptuously.

Davidson reached out and drew the paper toward him. His hand shook like that of an old man, and he could scarcely scrawl his name across the first line. He sank back with his eyes closed, and Rockwell took the paper, put it carefully into his pocket and went out.

At the top of the first editorial column of the next regular issue of the Weekly Times appeared this article:

### A NEW ENTERPRISE.

We are glad to announce in this issue of the Times the organization of the Consolidated Mineral Paint Company, with a capital of \$50,000. This company, formed solely of the farmers and business men of this community, has purchased



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the Hendry farm, six miles west of the city, and will manufacture into paint the peculiar clay found there. This clay is commonly called "keel," and is of a rich brown or reddish color, and contains a high degree of mineral matter, which insures its durability against the action of the weather. Material for the various buildings is being hauled to the place, and it is expected that the paint will be turned out early in May. The president of the Consolidated is J. F. Rockwell, who is well and favorably known in this vicinity, and who has evolved this project after a careful study of the conditions extending over the past ten years. William A. Davidson, Jr., president of the James County Savings Bank, is treasurer. With these two men at the head, the project cannot be other than successful. Thomas Grimby is the secretary.

# THE COWARD





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**A**T LANTA had been taken and burned by Sherman, and the army was marching on toward the sea. There was really little danger now. The backbone of the confederacy was broken. The old men had been killed in the earlier years, the young men were in the north holding Richmond against Grant and the reorganized army of the Potomac. None remained in Georgia but the children and the women, who worked away bravely and sobbed only secretly, and here and there bands of bushwhackers, who followed the marching army like hungry wolves, robbing isolated baggage-trains and picking off men and officers of the line from behind great cypress-trees and deep growths of underbrush.

On either flank of the army a regiment of western troops, made up of men experienced in Indian warfare, brave, cool, reckless, acted as running guards

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guards against these secret enemies. To one of these regiments John Herron belonged. He was a young man at the time, barely seventeen, but large of figure, broad-shouldered, and swift-limbed. No man in his own regiment could beat him at running for a wager, and only one soldier in the entire army had outstripped him, but that by so great a distance that the fellow was recognized as a professional, and the troops still declared Herron's title clear. His popularity appeared in the true pleasure with which the men had welcomed the appointment of one so young as sergeant. The promotion had come to him a few weeks before the march began.

Near Monticello, fifty miles east of Atlanta, the army halted for the night. Almost immediately an aid summoned Herron to the colonel's tent. He entered, saluted, and stood, tall and erect, before the gray-haired officer who sat bending over a map upon the table.

"Sergeant Herron?"

"Yes, sir. You have sent for me?"

"Yes," the colonel answered, and fell to studying the map.

"Know anything of the country round here?" he suddenly asked the  
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younger man. Then, upon Herron's negative answer, "No, of course not. Nobody does. God only knows where we're driving to. Now, we've a pretty task for you, if you're equal to it, and from what I hear, I think you are. You look it, too. It's this. You're to capture the captain of this gang of bushwhackers that's been pestering us all along. You're to take him dead or alive. He's at home, and we can't let him escape. These cowards have shot too many good officers. If we get the leader, it'll probably break up the business. But the devil of it is, how to locate the house. See here. We have information that it's two miles east on this road," pointing with his fat stubby forefinger to the map on the table, "and then two miles due south, and about a half a mile east. Here's the road all right that runs out east of the town, but I don't see any road branching south. There may be a private road or a cow-path. This country's all criss-cross anyway, and a native can't help getting lost once in a while; so you see your job. You're to take twenty men, and capture a man you never saw at a house located somewhere near the fifth meridian. Definite, isn't it?"

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Herron waited a moment, and then started to move away.

“‘Barney’s pets’ have been detailed as the squad you’re to take,” continued the colonel. “They’re used to this sort of thing, and not afraid of the devil and all his fireworks. Since Barney was shot by a bushwhacker they’ll be doubly anxious to go.”

Herron went back to his tent, his head and breast full of his first important commission. He could eat little at supper, and waited impatiently for the night to settle down upon them. He looked to his firearms and smoked a full pipe. At dark he met his men at the chosen rendezvous, a deserted house at the extreme east end of the little village. They were all there when he arrived, and a rougher, more ill-looking lot could not be found in the whole army. They were the scum of the river towns in the middle west—men with no respect and less discipline. They had been casting coarse jokes at one another and swearing softly, but as he came up a surly silence fell upon the fellows. Herron, unhesitating, walked into the center of the group.

“I guess you all know our game tonight,” he said. “It’s to find a guerrilla captain,

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captain, probably the one that killed your leader, Barney. I don't know much more about where we're going than you do, but we are to find the house. We won't start until midnight, so you had better sleep while I keep guard."

"Aye, aye, my hearty; you're bloomin' kind for such a youngster; damn my soul, but you are," a voice sang out from the rear of the crowd, and they all laughed. Then they all began to drop down on the ground in twos and threes, and almost immediately a mingled chorus of heavy breathing, snores and restless movements joined with the rustling of the leaves above. But Herron's mind was full of many things; his boyish days, a sweet mother's face, and grim battle scenes of death and agony, strangely mingled with bright pictures of his future and a happy home about him. He could not explain this thing that was upon him. It was not fear, for there was little danger. He did not recognize the nervousness that comes with the first heavy responsibility.

The location of the house was not such a difficult matter, after all. They followed the road indicated by the colonel, passing large old plantations with

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with low, long houses and tall old trees. The road did not follow a straight line as roads do in the west, but rambled over hills and through little ravines and around corners of woodland. There was no computing of distance except by time, no intersecting lines to act as signs.

The road suddenly plunged down into a gloomy little hollow, with tall pine-trees shutting out the light on either hand. The troop slowed up, and moved cautiously and in more compact shape. At the foot of the hollow they came to a dead halt upon a small wooden bridge that rocked beneath their feet. Unconsciously all the men became silent.

"We've come too far," said Herron.

"No, Sergeant, you're fooled by these cussed roads," one of the men answered. "It's up at the top of the hill."

"You're both dead wrong," another said. "We've come two miles just about right, and the next move's probably along some snake-track leading through those trees. That's just the way a bushwhacker would go home. It's in the breed."

"Well," said Herron, to decide the matter, "we've lots of time. Half of  
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you go straight ahead up the hill. Keep a sharp lookout on each side, and whistle us to you when you find an opening. We'll go back a ways and do the same."

The party divided, and Herron and his ten men marched back the incline they had just descended. They separated again into five men each, and edged the trees on either side. At the very top, on the south side, and where the wooded growth of the hollow began, Herron, stumbling over a root, dropped his gun to the ground. As he stooped for it his nails dug into the bare dirt instead of grass, and his eyes made a discovery. In a moment he was down on all fours, and had pulled a comrade beside him. Striking a match, they discovered a small bridle-path leading southward along the edge of the trees at the top of the little ravine.

The others were whistled back, and the entire party started slowly and cautiously forward. The path was little more than a line, and so indistinct that often they were forced to get down upon their knees and hunt for it as dogs nose for a trail. This they did for two hours, moving due south, when suddenly it opened into an old unused wagon-road that seemed to come in from the south,



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and then turned abruptly east into the hollow which had now broadened out.

The chances were for turning eastward, and this they did, marching more rapidly down the sloping bank. As they came down into the level the road made a sharp bend to the north, and suddenly brought them out from behind the trees into an open space, where nestled a snug farm-house with several outbuildings clustered about it. All was dark, silent, and spectral in the faint light of the sky.

The men stood motionless, while Herron's heart beat faster. A dog somewhere among the stables uttered a sharp, hoarse bark, then was silent.

The men quickly surrounded the house, and Herron shouted out:

"Open up, there. We want to see you."

They waited, but there was no response.

"Here, Wilson, you keep up the racket, and if they don't answer, smash in the door. I'll go round to the back. A guerrilla might try it that way first."

As he started to pass along behind the men, he saw that the brightest stars were dimming, and that many objects were standing forth from the black wall

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of night and taking on indistinct shapes in the fast-approaching dawn.

To one side, a row of small cribs with slatted sides attracted his attention. From his position he saw that both sides of the house were guarded. Wilson had ceased calling, and was pounding on the door, and in one of the upper rooms a light was stirring.

Herron threw open one of the sheds, and peered into it with straining eyes, and poked the butt-end of his gun into the corners. It was empty. Then he passed to the next crib, and threw open the door. At first he could see nothing in the darkness. Suddenly something moved at his feet. A man arose to his knees. The shed was a foot or so above the ground, and Herron found the man kneeling there on the floor, looking into his eyes in a dazed, helpless fashion. Long black hair fell down and blew fitfully about his shoulders in the early morning breeze that swept through the door. A rifle lay on the floor. Two pistols were in his belt. Herron stood rooted to the spot, unable to move.

The darkness was disappearing. A few late stars blinked faintly in the west. The trees were shaping themselves more distinctly against the gray light

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light which paled the east. A bird began to sing, and was answered from far off in the woods. A solitary rooster crowed. From the house women's voices mingling with Wilson's deeper tones floated down to Herron on the clear morning air.

The kneeling figure stirred. He sought his belt. But the movement aroused Herron. He knew that he had found the leader of the bushwhackers, the man he was to capture, dead or alive.

The man before him raised his pistol. Herron never knew how it happened, but instantly he too raised his weapon full against the man's shoulder, and he was looking straight in the eyes before him. There was a double report. Herron felt a ball graze his scalp, and heard a woman's scream from the house. When the smoke cleared away, the kneeling man had fallen back in a huddled heap, and two white-clad figures with streaming hair and outstretched arms came flying across the yard, followed by all the soldiers.

The men came up short at the shed, and then broke into uncontrollable turmoil. The women fell at the feet of the young sergeant, clasping his knees and  
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begging for the life of the wounded leader.

"There is no danger. If he is alive, no one shall harm him. Stand back there, men; stand back from that door!"

Discipline went to the winds. The troops were like cattle stampeded by the smell of blood. They swarmed about the door, and peered in at the chinks in the sides. Some swore, and one cried, "That's the chap that shot old Barney—I saw him do it. I was as near as this."

Their murdered leader, the numerous dead and wounded who had met their fate from guerrilla warfare, came into their minds. All mercy was crowded out. While Herron was attempting to quiet the women, one of the soldiers put his gun into a chink in the side of the shed and fired.

"That's right, give it to him. It's too good for his likes," one of the men cried out. "Give him hell!"

Inside the door the man had dragged himself to his knees, and shouted, "I surrender; gentlemen, I surrender! My God, don't shoot a prisoner!"

Herron rushed into the midst of the men.



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"Drop that!" he cried, and clubbed down a gun, and pushed the man back roughly.

Then he turned desperately toward the door. Some one plucked him back, just as a shot rang out beside him.

"What do you mean, you fool?" said a gruff voice in his ear, and a heavy blow was dealt him on the side of the head. He stood dazed and witless, but seeing all that occurred around him.

Suddenly the bushwhacker appeared in the doorway straight as an arrow, his eyes upon the women.

The sight instantly froze the troop into silence. Not a man moved, while the great round face of the sun, all fire and gold, came up above the crest of the hill, veiled in rainbow colors of fleecy ribbon-clouds, pink and delicate purple, orange and changing opal. Its beams fell directly upon the face of the man framed in the doorway.

Throwing up its arms, the figure lunged forward to the ground heavily. One of the troop reached down and cut away his pistol-belt with one weapon still in it. Another took his rifle. Then, like cowardly wolves, they turned tail and slunk up the road. Herron stood alone beside the fallen man. The older



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woman lay unconscious upon the ground. The other was hanging over the dead body of the man, pressing back the blood-clotted hair from the forehead and tenderly kissing the pale lips.

She was utterly unconscious of Heron's presence and he of hers. Like a man in a trance he walked mechanically after the men along the road leading up the hill. At the top he stopped and looked back, but the trees where the road turned shut out his view.

Suddenly he started like a man awakening from a bad dream, and put his hand to his scalp. Looking at his fingers, he found blood upon them.

## II.

**A**FTER the war John Herron located in one of the small towns of the new state, Nebraska, and in ten years had built up a large and successful business. Most of his wares he purchased in Omaha, and during one visit there he met Daphne Carroll, who was visiting her aunt. After that his business somehow took him more frequently to the city and on Christmas day, 1875, they were married.

Before coming to Omaha, Daphne Carroll had lived in Chicago, and there it was Herron took her on their wedding journey. Her earlier girlhood, she had told him once, had been passed in the south, but as she seldom spoke of her residence there, he took it for granted that it must have been very brief or she too young to have any vivid impressions of it. Chicago was always "home" to her, and so he planned the trip for her to that city.

The young couple spent two weeks  
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visiting her friends, the theaters, and the stores. The last night of their stay hung heavy on them. The train did not leave until midnight, and at dinner they were discussing what to do.

"What have'nt we seen?" she asked, removing her glove and gazing down at the ring on one of her fingers. They were long and slender and delicately white, as was her complexion, though her hair and eyes were dark, that rare combination found occasionally among beautiful women of the south.

"There's that war play," replied her husband, dishing the soup for the two; "we've done everything else in town. We ought to make our record complete."

"Well, we'll go, then," she said, smiling on him. "I'm afraid it'll be rather—rather depressing, but we can leave early if we don't like it. If we stay to the end, we can take a cab and go direct to the train."

The play was new and melodramatic enough, but there was interest in it for them. It took him back to the days of his youth and the wild, perilous life of the soldier. To her it was—but all during the play she sat quite still, gazing fascinated at the scenes. Occasionally

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she laid her hand gently upon his arm, and in one scene where a spy was shot, she grasped him with a grip of steel and her face was white, and he could hear her breath catch in her throat.

All during the ride to the station she was unusually quiet and preoccupied. He helped her from the cab and held her close to his side as they passed through the waiting-rooms and the lighted train-sheds to the Pullman car.

"Thank you, dear," were her last words, "for the play and the trip. It is like you."

At Omaha the next afternoon they took a small local train off the main line which would bring them home about seven that night. When the train started there were few passengers upon it, but these few gazed knowingly at the young married couple. Two weeks could not hide the tell-tale happiness that shone in the eyes of both. A large, red-faced man in a check-suit and gray slouch hat read his paper less attentively. A thin scrawny woman in black drew herself half-around and looked directly at them. A little child, sitting bolt upright near the center of the car, alone deigned them no attention. She clung tightly to a doll with a dirty, smashed-in

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smashed-in nose that sprawled awkwardly on the cushion beside her, and with her red mitten having rubbed a clear place on the pane, looked longingly out upon the frozen fields.

This little girl attracted the young wife, who, leaving her husband, went across and talked lovingly to her, as women do to strange children the world over. She found out that the little girl was going home—to a home she had never seen. Her father had gone a year before, and now she was coming, and he would meet her at the depot and take her to the great new house on the hill, with the long driveway and the crackling fire. Oh, she knew all about it, for he had told her all just before he left her a year before.

The afternoon wore on. The young wife came back to her husband who had turned over the seat in front and had piled their luggage upon it. He threw down his book and they talked of many things. Then silence came between them.

"I've been thinking all day of that play last night," she said, suddenly; "I can't get away from it. That poor wretch that was shot—his death-cry rings in my ears all the time."



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"It has had a depressing effect upon me, too," he said.

"I wish we hadn't gone," his wife went on. "We could have talked, which would have been much nicer."

"That play," Herron went on, "has brought up in my mind some things I have been trying to forget for ten years—some things I saw during the war."

"You in the war?" she asked, smiling. "Oh, you were too young."

"I was young enough, but there were plenty of youngsters on both sides—how many, God knows."

"John," she asked, gravely, after a moment's silence, "which side were you on?"

Surprise crept into his eyes as he straightened up proudly.

"With Grant before Vicksburg; then we were put on patrol duty along the Mississippi, and then they sent us east to join Sherman."

There was just the slightest movement on her part, an unconscious shrinking from him. He felt it, and it hurt him.

"You never told me that, John."

"No, I never told any one out here. Some things happened then—one thing especially

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especially down in Georgia—that I want to forget.”

“Georgia? Were you in Georgia? Why, that’s where—” She stopped abruptly, her hands tight-clasped in her lap.

The train was beginning to run heavily and lurch badly, for they were getting among the hills along the river where the road was rough. Neither seemed to notice it.

“That’s where—what?” Herron asked, gently.

“That’s where I lived—during the war.”

“Then you were—‘on the other side’?” he asked, in a low voice.

“Yes.” The answer was proud and she sat very straight, her eyes glowed bright and the color was on her cheeks. An intangible something ran through Herron, but he could not analyze the feeling.

“Yes,” she repeated, and her eyes were looking far away, “I was a rebel, and I’m proud of it. How I hated Yankees! I hate them yet!”

Suddenly she turned and caught his hand and began to caress it gently between her own.

“There, there, dear, now you know.

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I never told anybody, not even you. You must forgive me that, and what I said. I didn't mean that—that last. My old hatred came out again. I thought it was dead. That play and that scene of the spy brought it all back again—that awful morning when they killed him. He was a rebel captain, you know, without a company. No, no, dear, don't speak. Don't you see I want to tell you all now. I shall feel better for it. My father was a rebel captain, as brave as any man, one of the flower of the south. But his regiment was killed at Shiloh, almost every man, and he came home with a wound in his side. Then Sherman began his march to the sea, burning and killing, and devastating the whole country. There were only old men and weak women to oppose. My father was well then, and he gathered the boys of the plantations together and followed the Yankees from Atlanta. Yes, he was a guerrilla, a bushwacker, and he fought as was their way; but all's fair in war."

The old memory was beginning to have its effect upon her. Her breath came in shorter gasps and she did not see the pallor upon her husband's brow.

"Then, then one night he was at  
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home. A slave escaped and told the Yankees. That night they came to our plantation. They found my father's hiding-place in a corn-crib behind the house. No, no; listen! You must hear it all now."

She held his hand with an iron grasp and he could not move, overcome with the horror of it.

"They killed him there in cold blood. Ah, that was the northern way. They shot him penned in and begging for mercy. I can see it all now—the young officer —"

"Oh, my God!" It was Herron's voice, hoarse and suffering, but she did not hear him.

"— the grim soldiers, their terrible fire and the morning sun coming up on it all. Then suddenly he stood forth in the doorway, erect, his face at peace, but blood over his hair and clothes, his eyes upon me. Oh, father, father, father!"

Her voice sank to a whisper, her hands were at her breast. Her husband sat immovable as stone, frozen with horror.

The whistle of the engine shrieked and the wind rushed by. The chill air swept in at the loose windows. It had



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begun to snow and the icy flakes were beating sharply against the pane.

"But, dear, now I've told you," she said. She had taken his hand again and was running her fingers up his wrist. "I had to tell you. I've kept it so long—ever since mother died that same year and I came north to live after the war. I love you, John; don't you see how much? That's why I wanted you to know. Why, dear, how cold you are and strange. Tell me, what is it, dear?"

Herron struggled to his feet and stood unsteadily swaying back and forth in the uneven motion of the car. He stared at her and great drops of sweat came out on his forehead and face, and the muscles of his neck were like whipcords. He steadied himself by holding the arm of the seat, and bending over looked wildly into her eyes.

"I was there that night. I was with Sherman on the march to the sea, and I killed your father."

His voice was unnatural, brutal, and each word seemed as if wrung from him by torture. Then he sank into a heap beside her, but she shrank closer to the window.

"You, you, John Herron? You killed my father?"



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Herron shrank back and looked at her with haggard eyes.

"Yes, he said, slowly, "I—I—but—"

"You coward!" she burst out. "I hate you!"

Herron did not raise his eyes, but wearily getting up went into the car ahead.

The train drew up at a little station with a frosty grinding of wheels. The brakeman turned up his coat collar and went out, followed by the man in the checked suit and the scrawny woman in black. The opening of the door sent a chill over the car. A young woman entered, followed by a raw young farmer. She was about eighteen, large, awkward, and clad in an ill-fitting dress of green. The feathers in her hat suggested a home-dyed product of the poultry-yard. Her eyes were a dull blue, patient with the patience of dumb animals after long and continued toiling. On the third finger of her thick, coarse, red hand was a heavy gold ring, and on her left cheek was a streak of soot.

The young farmer wore a faded blue coat buttoned close to his unshaven chin. His drab-colored slouch hat was pushed back, showing his hair well-plastered

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plastered over his low, receding forehead.

"Here," he said, pushing her slightly ahead of him into the second seat to the left near the little sheet-iron stove which glowed red in the gathering twilight.

She turned. For a moment they gazed into each other's eyes. Stooping awkwardly, he kissed her so resoundingly that the brakeman entering at the rear door heard it. Then the man turned and went out.

"Well! Did you hear that!" exclaimed the brakeman.

There was no answer, though the child with the doll looked at the young girl with widening eyes. The whistle shrieked. The train started. And through an unfrosted corner of the window the country girl was gazing out to the platform where the man stood shivering in the cold, his hands deep in his pockets, his hat half-drawn over his eyes, which looked wistfully after her. Then she fell to picking absently at the threads in her dress and vainly strove to keep back the tears.

Dusk came on, and the brakeman lighted the lamps early. He went into the smoking-car to talk with a traveling-man of accidents, storms, and Nebraska blizzards.

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blizzards. The train swung sharply about hills, and in and out among ravines, now and then pitching heavily from side to side, finally dropping into the valley of a little stream frozen over.

Herron came in from the other car, moved a valise into a seat forward and sat down before his wife. He was calm, and for some time sat very still. Presently he rubbed a place clear on the window, made it large enough for her to see out of it, and pointed at the passing landscape still discernible in the evening dusk. He fell to telling her of the country-side, every foot of which he knew from boyhood exploration, for they were approaching their home. He talked quietly and evenly, and parts of his speech she heard distinctly, other parts but indistinctly, as if coming from some source far away.

"There is Turner's mill, the white roof over there among the hills. We used to camp there every summer. The best springs are there, and they never freeze over during this kind of weather. And a little lake with pond-lilies in the summer, and cat-tails, and a tiny little boat just large enough for two, if you sit quite still. I have often thought how

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I should like to go back there with you, and then we would wander up through the prettiest little ravine, where there are ferns and mosses and violets, up past the old stone spring-house, to the top of the hill. There's a green grove there in summer, with a swing and benches and a barrel-stave hammock. Some day we'll drive down here and see the view. We'll camp out a week, hunt and fish, and live like pirates.

"See that bluff over there? The snow's blown off, and its face stares at us. Now, do you see that dark spot near the top, with a faint line of white leading down slantingly? That's Conell's Cavern, as we called it, and the white line is the path covered with snow. It's a cave that runs back into the bluff and gets so small you can't squeeze through to the end. We boys killed a young wolf in there once. I can see its bright shining eyes gleaming at us yet. Then one day I slipped on the path and fell to the bottom—fifty feet—and it was a week before I knew my mother. One Sunday last summer I came down here and climbed up there, and fell to thinking of you. One can see for miles and miles, and somehow it seemed as if you were beside me and that we were looking



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ing out over the sea. We'll go there together some day."

She still heard him indistinctly, for she sat thinking deeply to herself. She turned a little pale, and her mouth trembled.

"There's Warner's Island," he went on, as a little ice-locked bit of land, with a tall old maple standing high above the little grove in the center, seemed to float down upon them. "That was the 'Treasure Island' of our boyish band of robbers. That line of trees over there to the north marks the 'great canyon,' as we used to call it. We're in the 'little canyon' now, but it's getting so dark we can't see. The hill goes straight up on that side, straight down on this to the river below. The railroad people had to make this climb to get into the village and across the slight 'divide.' It'll only be a few moments and we'll soon be there. It's not much over a mile to the station."

He had risen and gathered their things together. He helped her into her jacket and buttoned his overcoat tight. The train gave a sudden lurch just then, but they did not notice it.

"I hope you'll like our home," he said. "I know you will."



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"Wait, John," she said, quietly. "I want you to forgive me."

He started to turn to her, but another more violent lurch threw them both to the floor, and amid a terrific grinding and pounding and crashing of broken timber the train left the track and plunged down the embankment.

The car was lying upon its side. Herron found that they were pinioned under a broken seat, a heavy piece of timber from the roof weighing down upon them. Near the stove a great country girl with a streak of soot upon her cheek was screaming loudly. The child with the doll lay quite still, with her head hanging limp over the arm of the seat.

Herron said nothing. With all his strength he attempted to raise the beam. It moved some, and gradually working it backward and forward, he was able to free his head, and then his arms, and then to get clear altogether.

Looking about him, he saw that the little sheet-iron stove in its fall had been loosened and broken open. The live coals had rolled out and set fire to the woodwork. Within two feet of this stove lay the screaming country girl.

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Herron worked his way across overturned seats and broken windows to the center of the car and kicked open the small tool-chest near the line of little ventilating windows, and took out an ax and a crowbar.

Groping his way back slowly, for the car was gradually filling with smoke, he first raised slightly with the crowbar the timber that still imprisoned his wife. He chopped off the back of a seat and using this as a wedge gradually forced the beam upward until she could crawl up and half stand beside him. Then he fell to hacking at the top of the car near one of the little ventilators, through glass and wood and sheet-iron roofing, until he had made a hole large enough for them to creep out. He went through first and helped her to follow. They found themselves beside a little frozen stream in a narrow gulch, with here and there a gaunt bare-timbered tree.

She sank down close to a large rock with a bare sumach bush near it, while he returned to the car, creeping through the hole he had made in the roof.

Inside, the fore part of the car was ablaze. The country girl was sobbing and praying, and striving to edge farther

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ther and farther from the approaching flames.

It was some time before he could break in the seats and the part of the floor that had been crushed in about her. While he worked he heard a voice behind him. He turned. The brakeman, hatless, and with blood across his pale cheek, had followed him through the opening.

"Gawd, but this is awful," he said, breathless; "engineer, conductor, everything ahead pinned in—clean out of sight."

Together they lifted the country girl from the debris, her hair singed, her face burnt by the flames, and carried her out. At the opening Herron found his wife on the point of entering the car. The men stood the country girl on her feet, and she fell to crying again.

"Go for help—at the station," Herron shouted, and the brakeman started on the run toward the village. Stooping, Herron covered his blistered hands with snow.

"The child," said his wife.

He turned and silently crept through the opening. Inside all was flame and smoke. Crackling wood fell about him and the burning floor scorched his feet.

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It was some moments before he found the child, with head down, hanging limp over the edge of the seat, the doll still in her hand.

He gathered her gently into his arms and groped his way back to the opening. He saw that a burning timber had fallen from the opposite side of the car and blocked his exit. There was but one thing to do. Holding the child in the hollow of his arm, he again fell to hacking at the blazing beam. The flames crept about him, filled his eyes with smoke until the tears ran down his cheek, scorched his flesh until the skin peeled off in shreds. And still he worked on.

He felt a dull thumping in his ears, and the cords of his eyes drawing tighter. He marveled that the child in his arms lay so still. And then the beam gave way, he pushed through and fell headlong into the snow.

The flames broke forth from the car, painting livid red the snow-covered sides of the little valley. Dark figures came running from the village.

A large, awkward country girl with a streak of soot across her cheek and a heavy gold ring upon the finger of her left hand held in her aching arms the

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limp, still form of a child, still clasping tightly a sprawling doll.

Near the sumach bush beside the road a woman had thrown herself beside the prostrate form of a man with closed eyes, brushing back the singed brown hair and passionately kissing the motionless lips.

Presently the eyes opened and the lips smiled up at her faintly, while the flames died down a moment and a great white star came out in the sky above them.



AT DAWN OF DAY





## AT DAWN OF DAY

### I

**A**SULLEN group of roughly clad men stood in the street before the Clarke Palace Hotel. They did not talk much, but when they did there was hatred and vehemence in their tones. They moved in and out, now on the board-walk, now quite into the street, as if expecting something, but never moving resolutely. The rays of the early setting sun fell slantingly between the walls of the street, touching here and there a metal point with golden fire, or painting a higher pane in burning red. A man on horseback suddenly turned into the street, and the dust from his horse's feet settled down again like a shower of crimson mist.

"Hello! Lem," a man in the crowd called out as the rider drew near, stopped at the edge, and threw one foot over the saddle-horn, displaying a rough, dust-covered boot, laced on the side high up the

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the calf of his leg. His heavy blue shirt was opened at the neck so that the shaggy black hair showed on his breast. The iron-gray hair on his head was close-cropped and, something unusual in that country, he was clean-shaven. His mouth closed itself firmly over a square jaw. His eyes were deep and unfathomable, and above his right brow was the fine white track of a little scar. This was a mark he had received in his earlier frontier days along the Missouri River, before he had come out to the cattle country of northwestern Nebraska. The man never told its story.

Lem Jones did not like the looks of the men about him. Two or three times before in his life he had seen the same dogged silence and defiant looks in men of this type, and nothing good had come of it.

"Heard of the murder?" a man close to him asked, resting his hand on the horse's mane.

"Yes. Just heard of it. What are they doing up there?"

"Nothing," the same man answered; "that is, when I left, half an hour ago. Doc's there and half a dozen women folks are lookin' after Mrs. Baker; that is, they're lookin' after the children."



## AT DAWN OF DAY

dren. She's hangin' over him where he's layin' in the bedroom, sobbin' and moanin' and beggin' him to speak to her—not ravin' round like mad, but kind of quiet and still like. And Mrs. Sefton told me her eyes have been as dry as two marbles ever since they brought him in from the corral where they found him layin' with the bullet in his back—dry as stones."

No one answered. The same eager, restless, unnatural silence prevailed. Lem Jones threw his leg back to the stirrup and sat more erect.

"Well, what're you goin' to do?" he asked, finally.

Some one looked up at the man on horseback doggedly, then turned away quickly, as if to read the signs on the low-porched stores opposite, or to gaze far out on the widening prairies. One smiled knowingly, and another—a large, dark man in a wool cap, softly whistled an uncanny air through his teeth.

"We're waitin'," suddenly said the man in the wool cap, stopping his whistling abruptly and grinning savagely.

"Then keep it up, and let the law have 'em. That's the best thing for all of us, and you all know it. Baker's killed, true enough, shot in the back,



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and these fellows from the ranches have given us trouble enough, God knows. But none of you know any of the particulars—say, do you? Just how it all started and whose cow it really was, nor who fired the first shot. Now, I'm not defending those two fellows—understand that. I'm simply asking you men to wait. If they're guilty of coming up and murdering Baker for that cow, they'll hang sure and certain."

"Yes, I'm thinkin' they'll be a hangin', my hearties," sang out the man with the wool cap.

"The law'll do it, then. There's time enough, and they can't get away from Hunker and his men."

Jones slapped the reins against the horse's neck and galloped up the bare little main street, past the brick bank and the little red station of the railroad and on up the valley of the creek to his homestead, three miles away. As he came into the yard the moon was just rising over the big cottonwoods down where the road crossed the little creek and ran on up the opposite slope of the prairie.

Jones had lived on the frontier too long for surprises of any kind, and when  
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the same crowd of men, some on horseback, a few on foot, a wagon or two following in the rear, drove into his yard about nine o'clock that night, he felt what was coming. He knew almost instinctively that their slumbering passions had been fanned into a flame by news from the sheriff, and that they had come out to meet that officer with his prisoners, and that they desired him to be a party to their night's work.

The crowd was more excited than in the afternoon. They were talking more, and a little old man on the wagon seat was singing a drunken song. Jones stood by the windmill, which creaked dismally in the night breezes.

"What is it, boys?" he asked, quietly.

"Lem," said Bill Stein, the liveryman, pushing out of the crowd into the center of the semicircle that had formed about Jones—"Lem, Hunker's got 'em. One of his men's come back and told us, and Jerry Cotton's just come in from Newton's ranch, where he met a man who said they'd confessed. We're all agreed that these two fellows's got to be strung up. That'll settle this cattle-claiming business for some time to come. We've run the risk of bein' shot down like dogs by 'em long enough."

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The man paused to see if Jones would indorse the sentiment. Jones put his foot on the water-trough and pulled at his boot-strap, but said nothing.

"There's no danger," went on the liveryman, slightly discouraged by his failure to appeal to Jones; "the man who came on ahead says the sheriff told him they'd cross the creek down here about half-past ten or eleven. They'll get out of the way and leave things to us and the cottonwoods."

Jones still remained silent, gazing off over the valley to the dark outlines on the opposite side. Then he looked at the cottonwoods in the little hollow a hundred yards below, and then around to his own house as if the trees were unpleasantly near his home. His wife with frightened face stood in the doorway looking at him, and two children in white night-dresses peeped out from behind her skirts.

"What more do you know about this thing than you did this afternoon? Merely somebody's word that they've confessed. That's all, and that's second-hand, and not enough for the business."

"Lem's goin' back on us," came from some one in the crowd, and the word  
"coward"

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"coward" came from no one knew where.

Jones straightened up quickly and spoke again.

"We've got lots of time, boys, before they get here, and I'll tell you something that happened to me once when I first came out West."

"One of the horses hitched to the wagon bit at the neck of the other, and with an oath the driver gave a jerk at the lines.

"It was in the sixties," Jones continued. "A schoolmate and I had come out west to try our luck and make our pile. I stopped at Brownville, which was the boss town in those days, but my pard went on farther west, and I lost track of him. The country was lively enough then, and men as tough as anywhere. There was always claim-jumping going on, and fights, and lots of horse-stealing. That was the commonest of all, and the men along the river formed a vigilance committee to stop it. It was the first in Nebraska.

"I had not been there long before I had an experience with this committee. Some horses had been stolen down on the Kansas border, and the thieves had run them up into our country and then



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started west. The alarm ran to Brownville and then around the country. About six that night a man galloped up to our place and told us to be at Johnson's corral at nine o'clock. I was not one of the committee, but the man I was working for told me to come along, and I went. The night was like this—just as bright and clear and pale-like. That was nearly fifteen years ago, yet I can remember everything in that ride—every bush, every tree and house, along the road.

"When we got to Johnson's place there were twenty or thirty others there, all on horseback. There was a wagon, too, and happening to stop near it, I saw an ax and a coil of rope in the bottom, and two spades. The driver looked around at me and laughed and winked significantly. Then some one handed him a black bottle. He took a drink and handed it to me, and then we started to go, following the main-traveled road in a westerly direction over the hills.

"There had been perfect silence at the corral except for the pawing of the horses and the champing at their bridles, and now on the road to the ranch no one spoke. All the men seemed to understand perfectly what was going



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on. It was all strange and new to me, and as we followed the trail I felt a keen fascination—the spirit of the hunter, growing in me. My blood ran hot, and I found myself spurring on as eagerly as the rest.

“One man rode on a few feet ahead of the others, a large man in a wide-brimmed hat, red shirt, and long, heavy boots. He held the reins with one hand and carried a shot-gun across the saddle-horn with the other. At times he would stop the whole party by holding up his hand. He would dismount, and kneeling, examine the tracks along the trail, and then mount again, riding on as stern and somber as death itself.

“About midnight we came near Robbin’s ranch, and suddenly lost the tracks. The man in the red shirt dismounted, groped about, and then looked off across the hills in all directions. Others got down and examined the dust of the road, and all fell to talking hurriedly, but scarcely louder than a whisper.

“The leader finally pointed to a wooded ravine some distance to the left, the headwaters of the Callahan, and we all mounted and galloped across to the little growth of trees and brush. We formed a line at the lower end, and getting

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ting to our feet, beat our way slowly up the ravine, like an attacking party. At the very apex of the growth we found four horses—three bays and a white mare—tied to some young saplings.

"The boys pulled the animals out into the moonlight.

"‘Just the description!’ said the leader.

"‘White one limp any?’ asked some one.

"They hit the mare on the back with a whip and it started up quickly. There was a slight catch in its movements.

"‘Just right,’ said the leader. ‘They’re warm yet, too,’ putting his bare hand on the flank of one of the bays. ‘Now for Robbins’s.’

"Robbins’s ranch, a sort of road-house for travelers along the California trail, was a lonely, rambling frame structure standing white against the sky a good mile away. We rode up to it quietly and gathered in a bunch behind the barn some distance from the house, which was dark and gloomy, and cast a long, black, ugly shadow far down the hillside. A dog suddenly came creeping around the barn and growled ominously. One of the men cut at it with his whip, and it went yelping down the path to the barn.

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"The man in the red shirt spoke shortly.

"Men, they're probably in there. We'll ride around the house. If they start to run, shoot 'em down. Pass the bottle.'

"The whisky went around twice. Then we quickly surrounded the house, and the leader gave a loud knock on the door. Robbins, the ranchman and hotel-keeper, put his frowsy head out of an upper window. In the moonlight his face looked pale and strangely drawn and his eyes seemed big and restless.

"What's up?' he asked bravely.

"Come, old man, open up here,' the red-shirted man answered. 'We're after some fellows you've got in here.'

"The man drew in his head quickly. All was silent. Then a dim, uncertain light appeared along the wall of the lower room, which grew brighter. The door was thrown open and the crowd burst in. I with two or three others stayed outside and held the horses. Inside we could see men moving about, and then a light appeared again in the sleeping-loft above. This went out and there was silence again. It seemed an hour that the others were gone. Suddenly I found my knees shaking as if I

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had the ague, and the pale, ghostly moonlight and that awful silence of the men and the place weighed down upon me like the stillness of a tomb.

"There was a hurried movement within and everybody came out of the door pell-mell. I saw three bound men pushed along in their midst—two large, burly-looking fellows, and one more slight and slender, almost boyish. That was all I could see as they laid them flat in the wagon. Then we all went back toward the river, the men surrounding the wagon two deep and silent as statues.

"Being young and comparatively unknown, I kept well in the rear and could not see the thieves in the wagon, but from time to time I heard one of them laugh or joke easily with the other, and then there came in frightened tones, evidently from the younger one, questions as if he didn't understand.

"'What is it? What's all this mean? My God, what's the matter?' he kept asking, his voice broken and unnatural with fear.

"'Matter enough for you, chicken-heart,' some one answered roughly. 'Say your prayers, kid, and damn quick at that.'



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"We had been riding two hours or so toward the river, and now came down into a ravine thick with brush. I can see that place yet—all trees and sunflower stalks and hazel brush, and one old cottonwood standing straight up in the center with an arm projecting almost at a right angle from the trunk. That was about all we could see, and that only faintly, because the leaves shut out the moonlight.

"The wagon stopped under the tree. The young man, looking up, saw that limb, and then it all dawned on him fully.

"'What are you going to do with me? What are you going to do with me?' he screamed in terror, and I could hear him thrashing about in the wagon-box to get free. Somehow a strange feeling came over me then—a feeling of something wrong, of something into which I was strangely and fatally drawn—but the awfulness of the whole scene held me with a powerful fascination, and drove all reason or ordinary feeling and thought from me.

"Two men had taken the spades from the wagon beside him, and by the light of a lantern had begun digging a hole in the ground.



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“‘What are you going to do with that rope and those spades — my God, tell me!’

“‘We’re goin’ to hang you fellers,’ a brutal voice came out of the darkness.

“‘Not me! not me! not me!’ the boy screamed and then broke in a sob and was quite still. Afterwards some of the men said he muttered softly to himself as if praying, and some one heard him say ‘Mother’ and ‘Mary’ softly to himself.

“The other prisoners played the game with iron nerve. They sat, bound hand and foot, in the back of the wagon, and coolly eyed the men about them, gazed at the trees critically, and when some unexpected noise sounded far away among the trees, looked at each other swiftly and with brightening eyes.

“‘Getting tired down there?’ one of them asked the diggers. ‘Put Bill and me down there and we’ll see how it goes to dig our own grave. Eh, Bill? It’ll rest us, too.’

“The audacity of the thing took the crowd, and they untied the hands and feet of the prisoners and dropped them into the half-dug hole. Perhaps the two thought to make a break for freedom somehow, but the men stood close  
about

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about them and drew slip-knots tight about their necks.

"'How ye like your harness?' asked one of the thieves.

"'Rather wearing on the nerves, that's all,' responded the other, and laughed up at the crowd.

"By the time the grave was finished, the crowd was growing impatient. They made the two grave-diggers get into the wagon. Some one climbed to the limb of the tree and tied the loose ends of the rope securely. Then they made the boy get up, and they placed a rope about his neck, and tossed the loose end to the man in the tree. The boy did not resist, but he kept shouting to the crowd to hear him, that he had something to say.

"There was a good deal of noise at the time. Some of the men were swearing and shouting that they had waited too long, and yelling to 'string 'em up!' Others were backing their horses about in the underbrush, and shouting to one another for this or that. But the boy knew it was his last chance. With a courage born of despair he kept shouting for them to hear him, to listen to his story.

"Finally the leader shouted out in a

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big voice, 'Give the boy a chance. Let him have his say!'

"The crowd quieted down a little, like savage beasts held at bay, and the lad began.

"It was just beginning to get the least bit light in the east, and gray dawn was creeping in among the trees. A dog barked hoarsely far away among the hills and a rooster crowed. An early bird started up suddenly, then stopped abruptly. A soft wind rustled among the leaves and the grass. The horses champed upon their bits, and the wagon creaked as the horses hitched to it moved restlessly back and forth. The men were gathered about the wagon, and the grave beside it in a dark mass, and above it the three men stood outlined against the gray dawn in the east.

"Their backs were to me, but something familiar about the boy struck me then for the first time. He began to speak, and his voice ran through me with a strange, illusive, terrifying thrill.

"I cannot repeat to you all he said, but he went on to tell the crowd that he had come out west but a few weeks before, that he had gone up the Platte for  
work.

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work. He had found none, and was now returning east. He was simply spending the night at the ranch. He had never seen the other two men before. The ranchman, Robbins, could tell them that. So could the other two. He turned to them and they swore it was so.

“‘Oh, it’s a trick. They’re trying to save one of the gang,’ somebody shouted out. ‘Can’t come that on us. Drive up there, Collins, and let’s shove ’em into kingdom come and be done.’”

“The young man went on, but more quietly, as if all hope were gone. He said he had come back to visit a friend near Brownville—an old schoolmate. If they would give him until the next day, he would prove it. His name was—and then he named me.

“Everything came back to me with a rush. I remembered then. I saw it all. In the darkness and the crowd I had not recognized him. But I knew his voice then. I knew his form in the spreading dawn.

“I did not wait. I jumped from my horse. I broke through the crowd and climbed to the wagon. I shouted at the top of my voice. I told them it was all true. He was my friend. They were hanging an innocent man. They were



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all murderers. I begged them to wait until daylight. I would stand for him. I promised everything if they would wait, only wait until daylight.

"Suddenly a perfect roar arose. The whole crowd was shouting and swearing and yelling at once. Some were crying out, 'Don't hang the boy! Let him go! It's a mistake! Cut him down!' But others were yelling, 'Hang him! String 'em all up! He's one of 'em! It's a damned trick! Swing 'em.'

"All at once the wagon gave a lurch forward. I lost my balance. I clutched at the wagon side, but went headlong down the bank, crashing through the thick brush. The fall stunned me.

"The stillness of death had come over the place when I got back to the tree. The light was just streaming over the hill full upon the three black forms swinging in the breeze. I saw only one — the lifeless body of my murdered friend. That's all, boys. I'm going in now."

Jones turned and moved toward his wife and children still standing in the doorway. The group of men still remained silent. The horses could be heard shoving the hay about in their mangers. A night bird flew overhead



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with flapping wings. The windmill creaked.

One by one the men turned and moved out of the farm-yard. Some went up the road and some back to the village.

About midnight Lem Jones heard a noise. He got up and looked out of the window. Two bound men surrounded by four others, all on horseback, were passing. He watched them in the moonlight as they went on down the road, past the big cottonwoods at the crossing of the Sandy, and over the level prairie until they disappeared up the hillside beyond. Then he turned back to his bed and went to sleep.



# THE BLIZZARD







## THE BLIZZARD

**A**ND now the story," I insisted. It was New-Year's night. The guests had departed, the children had gone to bed. In the parlor, where the light was low, we sat before the fireplace, my aunt and I alone. In the library Uncle John had drawn on his smoking-jacket and thrown himself into the depths of a great leathern chair. Through the half-drawn portières we could see his profile, his head thrown back against the cushion as he gently puffed curls of smoke and watched them float slowly upward. Whatever his thought was, it filled his mind completely, for he seemed neither to hear the storm as it tore through the shrubbery and beat against the windows, nor to see us in the dimly lighted parlor. I glanced from him to my aunt, and spoke again.

"And now the story."

She did not answer, but sat gazing  
into



## THE BLIZZARD

into the fire, its flames playing fitfully upon her face. Her hair was silvered slightly and faint crow's-feet were webbing here and there upon her cheeks, but they were yet fair with the delicate bloom of middle age, and her large dark brown eyes were soft and tender.

"You have promised me so long and have never told it, and this was the night."

"Well, dear?"

And this is the story as she told it.

It was New Year's day of the "great winter," as they call it, a day that had dawned quiet, intensely cold and sullen. The chimney-smoke went straight up to the heavy gray clouds above in narrow, ever-twisting columns. Wagons crunching over the beaten roads a mile away could be heard through the cold, crisp air. Under the sheds the cows huddled close, with frosty noses steaming across each other's shoulders. The fowls remained in the barns, sitting motionless on the rafters and the tops of the stalls. Even the dogs kept to their kennels. All the earth was pervaded with a death-like calm, yet over the frozen fields the snow swirled round and round in little eddies, scudding  
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along the hilltops and then out of sight into the hollows.

"Signs," muttered the men, gazing anxiously at the clouds; and they fell to heaping high the wood about the fire-places, and to banking anew the cellars and the sheds and stables. In their haste was the fear of age, fear that was no stranger to them; but Jack and I read nothing in the gloom and the hush that had spread over the fields and the valleys. For the annual New Year's dance was to be held that night at the Bend, fifteen miles down the river, and we were going.

"Let a pack of old men's fancies frighten us out?" said Jack as we came out to the cutter hitched at the front gate. "Just think of missing the supper—an oyster supper out here in Nebraska—fried, scalloped, roasted, and raw—a turkey stuffed with 'em—and cranberry-sauce strained and jellied—and celery. This celery came from Kalamazoo, Michigan, and it's the first we've had for years, and the boys ordered it just for the party. Oh, come now, you want to go, don't you? I planned it all for your pleasure. I wanted this New Year's day to be your very best one."

## THE BLIZZARD

But I still stood beside the cutter with my skirts gathered in my hand, while he pulled at the folds of his cap awkwardly.

"Are you afraid?" he asked, laughingly, not knowing my thoughts were for him. "It's an ugly enough road in and out and over those hills and hollows and ravines along the river. But we can make it in two hours easily. Let me wrap the robes tight about you, Indian fashion. It's warmer that way. Ah, the red just suits your dark complexion." And we started.

"Old Headland's murky enough to-day. You notice how it has a sort of 'low-barometer' appearance about the edges," he went on as we left the little settlement in the valley below and swung up Hayward's Hill and caught a view of the wide Platte valley stretching off to the northwest—one expanse of dull, gleamless snow, hedged in on either side by the hills and broken only by the darker color of the frozen river and the fringe of trees along its banks. Far to the north the Headland jutted in and shut out the view, its brow enveloped in heavy, threatening clouds.

Jack leaned forward and drawing the whip from the stock flecked the lagging  
sorrel,

## THE BLIZZARD

sorrel, and the cutter sped over the road as along a narrow winding ribbon of glass, the horses' shoes keeping up a metallic "click-click" upon the beaten and frozen snow.

I nestled my chin and face down into my furs, leaning back and watching him from the corner of my eyes. He sat as straight as an arrow, taking the breeze full in the face. His coat-collar was not buttoned close, but showed the deep rich red that had mantled his neck and cheeks. A little stray lock of wavy brown hair had stolen from under his cap. And he wore the bit of red geranium I had placed in his overcoat lapel just as we started.

A mile beyond Bentley's place the road dipped down into one of those little hollows so numerous along the South-Platte hills, where stunted trees and bushes and dead sunflower stalks lined either side.

In descending the incline one of the traces was loosened. Fortunately, we were near the bottom of the little hill, and, throwing the reins to me, Jack sprang out to fasten it. Just as he turned back to the sleigh again, there was a rustle in the bushes, the sound of twigs snapping, dead weeds giving



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ing way, and frozen snow crunching softly.

Jack stopped short, turned, pushed back his cap, and listened.

Patter, patter, then again the crackling of the weeds, but not so near. Then sudden silence, such as comes to one at dead of night. The horses stood perfectly motionless, their manes blowing slightly, their ears erect, their nostrils quivering.

Jack turned his head and nodded to me significantly. Then he wheeled about again, waited, and watched the thicket narrowly.

All around was perfect silence, intensified by the dead whiteness of it all, for the slightly undulating prairie stretched far away to the east.

The road ran on up a little hill, disappeared, was seen again, and then lost itself in the distance. Here and there to the right and left were little hollows with meager growth of dead weeds and dried buffalo-grass, and stunted shrubs on the more level parts dotted the snow-white surface of the earth. No rabbit crossed the road. No dog skulked across the fields. No man appeared on the hilltops. No other living thing in sight. Over all lay the silence—the silence



## THE BLIZZARD

lence that startles and yet deadens, the silence of the sepulchre.

Suddenly the horses pricked back their ears, and then from behind the cutter there came again the crackling of twigs, the crunching of snow. Jack and I both turned at once. Something gray leaped into the road and instantly slunk into the underbrush of the opposite side.

For a moment Jack stood peering into the thicket. But silence deeper than before reigned over the place.

"Well, we got a good sight of him, anyway. I'd have given a good deal for a shotgun. He was as big and as gray and as shaggy as the one Sam Mason shot down on Hinkley's Island before Christmas. What a splendid trophy it would have made for the dance to-night."

Then he noticed my silence, and turning, must have seen the tell-tale fright in my eyes.

"Oh, afraid? You coward you!" he said, laughingly. Do you think one lonesome old wolf that can't muster nerve enough to yelp is going to scare up a whole colony of the beasts and chase us to the Bend?"

"No, but they bring bad luck," I said.

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"I know that something will happen — it always does."

For I could not but think of that night years ago, long before Jack came, when as a girl I had stayed with my grandmother, who was too sick to be left alone and my mother was worn out with watching. All during the long hours, far away among the hollows and hills, and nearer, down by the creek, I had heard them snarling and yelping and growling. At dawn they ceased. At least I heard them no more, for she had died at daybreak. And I told Jack, but he could not understand.

"Why, of course you heard them, but they didn't foretell your grandmother's death. They kept up their infernal racket around the place because they had made a haul from somewhere and were wrangling over the find. Don't think any more about it, but tell me how many dances I get with you to-night."

The sun came creeping out from the clouds reassuringly just then. There were a few faint streaks of indistinct red and yellow across the fields, and then the clouds slowly closed in and over its face. It was then about half-past four o'clock. We were two-thirds of the way to the Bend and were just entering

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entering the little valley of Pawnee Creek, which takes its name from the Indians who formerly dwelt in a village at the foot of the great round knob-shaped hill where the stream enters the Platte.

"Kate," Jack said as we crossed the little bridge and started up the hill out of the valley—"Kate," and his voice was very soft and gentle then, and there was something in it so new that it sent a thrill all through me. "Kate,"—he hesitated, and somehow I knew that he had turned half around to look at me, but for all my life I could only gaze straight ahead up the irregular road that seemed suddenly to have opened new visions to me. He turned back to the horses and was silent, and I would have given my life to have had him speak again. And then it burst upon me, and—well, I knew as I never knew before.

"Kate," he said, "there's something I must tell you right now. I've wanted to speak of it so often of late, but somehow—somehow—this is different—and—and—why, don't you see, Kate, don't you know—I—"

And I knew; but before I could let him see, something happened. A simple gust of wind blew a handful of snow

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sharply against our faces. The horses sniffed uneasily, pricked up their ears, moved nervously as if in dumb fright. Through the silence of death which lay upon the hills and the river there came stealing down from the north the faint rumbling of a thousand hoarse throats far away, then a growling and distant muffled roaring, and then nearer and nearer and nearer a pitching and rolling and thunderous crashing as of a thousand wagons with teams running wild to their destruction.

The wind blew a gale now, sweeping up and beating the snow against our faces with the sting of red-hot needles. The air was a blinding sea of white, a greenish yellowish white, that spread over the prairie a darkness and yet not a darkness, something strangely oppressive, mysterious, deadening.

"It's no use," Jack shouted above the roar of the wind. "We can't go on; we must find a house—got to get back to Bentley's. Can you hear—get down into the sleigh—do you hear—the bottom? Hurry, get down, get down—the blanket—over your head—all right—now."

The horses plunged forward with terrific speed. The cutter rocked as an  
open



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open boat on a high sea. Suddenly I knew that we had lost the road, for I could feel Jack's body pitch and lurch with the swaying of the sleigh as it crashed over bushes and fallen trees, and once he fell heavily upon me. But I scarcely felt it then, for I had crept closer into the bottom of the cutter and had buried my face in the robes to shut out the hideous darkness that seemed to penetrate my very brain.

The cutter came to a sudden stop. There was a great straining, a faint splintering and cracking of wood, and then I was thrown headlong into the snow. The cutter had caught on a fallen tree, and the horses were running madly over the hills.

Jack tenderly lifted me up, stunned and bewildered, and fell to brushing gently the snow from my face and hair.

"God," he said, as if to himself, and I scarcely knew his voice. And then, "Dear, there's but one thing. Stay under the sleigh. I'm going for help." Taking out the seat, he pushed back the snow from under the cutter.

"No, Jack, Jack, not that; you must not go, Jack—must not go—I cannot—oh, Jack"; but my words were lost in the



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the storm and he did not hear. He had cleared the snow away and had placed the blankets upon the ground, shouting to me to lie down and let him wrap them about me. I did not move, and again he shouted to me, but I stubbornly refused, standing there gazing at the ground, and he could not understand, thinking it cowardly fear or a woman's weakness.

"Come—quick!" he insisted.

"Jack, Jack—no—I cannot—not that."

"You fool," he burst out; "you'll kill us both. I thought you a woman, and you're only a child. But you shall get under there." And he seized me by the wrist and pulled me toward the cutter. He was so close that I could see his hair covered with snow and ice and the bit of red geranium, wilted and frozen now. He was breathing so hard that I could feel his breath against my face. But our eyes did not meet. Without a word I crept under the cutter and with closed eyes let him wrap the blankets tight about me, caring little then for wind or snow or storm, for it seemed as if my heart were dead. Still, without a word I let him drop the cutter over me, and  
outside

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outside there was no sound save the ceaseless roaring of the wind.

Suddenly the cutter was lifted again and a face was bending close to mine.

"Kate, forgive me. I was angry, dear. God knows I didn't mean it; I wouldn't pain you for the world. For don't you see, I love you, dear—have loved you for months and couldn't speak it—not even to-day—and now perhaps for the last time I must, and—"

He caught the glad light in my eyes. "And so keep a good heart, love; the world is fair, even to-day."

He knelt and kissed my lips twice, and drew the blanket tighter about me. And I fell to weeping softly while he went plunging forth into the outer darkness and the storm.

A long time I lay there under the sleigh, listening to the wind rushing by and the snow beating against the sides of the cutter. Little clouds of snow as fine as mist whipped in through the cracks and under the edges and stole in between the folds of the blanket, and I could feel them floating over my cheeks, building narrow ridges across my forehead and gathering in the corners of my eyes. Then this ceased and the roaring of the wind died away. I

## THE BLIZZARD

did not know then that the sleigh was nearly buried and that over it the storm was still sweeping on furiously.

I thought it all had ended, and listened with bursting ears for Jack's return. My arms and legs were cramped and numb and my body cold as ice. When I closed my teeth, sharp pains darted through my forehead and across my eyes. Once I heard a shout and half raised myself, but all was silent as the grave.

I lay back wearily, but my body ached no longer. My head seemed a stone. My eyelids were as lead and kept slipping down over my eyeballs until I could hold them up no longer. Making one frantic effort to keep awake, I half raised myself and tried to cry out. But I sank back exhausted, consciousness slipping from me—in my ears the same distant uncertain shouting as before, in my eyes a figure fighting desperately against the whirling, deadening sea of whitish, greenish black.

The log in the fireplace had burned low and was falling into dying embers. Far away a whistle sounded distant and muffled. Outside the winter winds sobbed among the bare trees. Somewhere

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where in the house a door slammed shut and its sound went echoing through the halls. The log burst forth in a feeble burst of flame and then died down completely.

For a long time we sat in silence. Then she arose quietly and entered the library, where he was stretched out in the leather chair holding a dead cigar between his fingers and gazing at the ceiling.

She leaned over him from behind the chair. "Jack, dear, I have been telling the story of our ride."

He reached up and took one of her hands in his.

"Yes," he said, softly. "It was thirty years ago to-night."

Stooping lower she kissed him gently and fell to running her fingers tenderly over his forehead and brushing back the hair from his temples, with a little sigh of content.





ASHLEY





## ASHLEY



R. R. S. ASHLEY, his wife, and his sixteen-year-old son had arrived in Chicago and were staying at the Great Northern. They had come from their little home town in northwestern Nebraska to see the World's Fair—a visit they had planned and looked forward to since a certain evening in early spring when Ashley had brought home an "Official Guide," and had unfolded to the family his scheme for "Tad's graduation present" and "mother's long-earned holiday." And so all through his last term in the high school, the final examinations, and the graduation exercises, Tad was dreaming of the trip to come. To Ashley himself there was more pleasure in the planning than in the actual going. Every night after business hours he would get out the guide-book and with "Tad" and "mother" plan little excursions over the grounds,



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grounds, little programs for the evenings, and little lists of things to purchase for their friends. The memoranda he would place in his notebook along with another list of pleasures which he alone had planned for his wife and his son. This list he had not permitted them to see.

Mrs. Ashley, however, found more real pleasure in the planning than either her husband or her son. For weeks she had had a dressmaker at the house, cutting and sewing and fitting, and all the neighbors had been in to advise and help, and talk it over, until Ashley declared that the place resembled nothing so much as the good old church sewing societies of his youth. But he encouraged his wife in it all. The eighteen years of their married life had been too busy for much pleasure. Her time had been filled with household duties, his with the building up of his moderate business. He was getting on his feet now. Nothing remained but the small mortgage on the home and one note to the local bank which he hoped to meet in the fall. So he encouraged his wife in her planning, and actually took delight in her little feminine extravagances.

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"That's right, Jane," he had said; "just get anything you wish. I want you to look your best, little mother—equal to any of 'em. And you'll do it, too. Why, Tad, your mother's just as good-looking as when I first met her twenty years ago at Johnson's party. For eighteen years we've slaved and never had a vacation—not so much as a trip back to the old home in Vermont. So we're going now in the best of style. We'll spend some money, and see something, and make up for lost time."

So they had come to Chicago and were staying at the Great Northern. It was the morning after their arrival, and they were taking breakfast.

"Why, father," said Tad, suddenly, looking up from the morning paper, "it says here that the Louisiana Land and Improvement Company has gone under. That's our Mr. Merrill's southern land scheme we've heard so much about, isn't it?"

"It can't be. Let me look at it." Ashley took the paper, but it trembled slightly in his hand. "Yes, that's the company. I wonder what could have caused it. Thought Merrill was solid as a rock, but you can't tell nowadays.

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That looks rather bad for our —" But Ashley did not finish his sentence. From his inside coat-pocket he took out his notebook, selecting the slip marked with the program for that day. He did not look at the newspaper again.

The evening dailies confirmed the report of the failure, and ascribed it to the closing of a large Philadelphia bank which had been deeply interested in the southern company. The failure, the article went on to say, would be felt most heavily by Iowa and Nebraska bankers, who, through Merrill's efforts, had been drawn into the southern enterprise. If Merrill's bank at Sioux City was forced to the wall, it would pull down ten or fifteen smaller country banks. Ashley felt certain that his home bank would be one of these. Merrill had started it several years before his removal to Sioux City and his great financial success there. But though Merrill was said to hold no stock in the smaller bank, his former connection would have its bearing on the future course of that institution. Ashley understood the situation perfectly, and, more than that, he understood how vitally it affected him and how much it might mean to him and his family. But  
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through it all not once did his fears reach his face.

"We'll go and see Sol Smith Russell to-night," he said, cheerily. "It's years since we've seen a good play. They say he's one of the best players in the city. And I've got the best seats in the house—right down in front by the stage." And the three went, and laughed and cried over the homely play, which touched their hearts to the very depths.

The next morning was Sunday, and they came down to breakfast rather late for them. Tad opened the paper.

"Here's more about the big Louisiana failure, father. It's pulled in Mr. Merrill—yes, and here's a whole lot of little banks, too. I wonder if —"

"Just let me glance at that a moment." Ashley took the newspaper. "It's too bad for Merrill—probably it'll eat up everything he owns. I feel more sorry for his family, though. They've lived a high life since they left our town and it'll go hardest with them." Then he glanced at the special dispatch from Sioux City. The bank of his home town was one of the first in the list of those which were affected. Ashley folded the paper slowly and placed it in his outer coat-pocket. Then he turned to his wife,



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wife, who had been giving her order and had not heard the conversation between the two.

"Where do we go to church this morning? One of the large ones? Just wait until I find it. Oh, yes, we'll go to hear Dr. Gunsaulus, and in the afternoon out to Lincoln Park."

When they came in that evening a telegram was awaiting Ashley. He thrust it into his inside coat-pocket unopened and met Mrs. Ashley's tired but happy face.

"Now for some supper and then to bed early. I'm half-famished and dead tired. To-morrow we'll start in to do the fair systematically, and see everything there is to see if it takes us a month."

They had their supper and then Ashley escorted his wife up the elevator and to her room. Tad remained in the office below.

"Now, you go to bed right away, little mother, and rest up completely. Tad and I'll sit down in the office a little while and then turn in."

Coming back, Ashley took his boy by the arm and drew him into a window of one of the little side-rooms.

"Tad, read that," and Ashley handed his



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his son the telegram which he had taken from the envelope during his absence. It was several moments before the boy fully understood. The father sat silently gazing out into the night.

"Tad, I owe that bank a good deal of money. I'd hoped to straighten it up this year, but I can't meet the note just now. If the bank won't give me time, it means ruination. I don't know what they'll do, but if they call in their paper now, I'll lose everything—home and all. That mortgage on the home is the worst thing. Why, my God, it would kill mother to have to give it up after nearly twenty years there." And his voice broke. Then in a moment he went on quietly:

"She must not know now. I must leave on the midnight train, and you must tell her it was important business. Explain it away somehow—I leave that to you. She's tired now and sleeping, and it's best not to wake her. She'd only worry. You must look after her now, my boy."

For hours father and son sat there in the little room and talked—talked of many things—talked for the first time in their lives as man to man. Then Ashley went up to his room and ten-

derly

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derly kissed his sleeping wife. Coming down again, he handed over the little slips and a roll of bills to Tad. He grasped the boy by the shoulder and wrung his hand quickly, and then left him with a husky good-by.

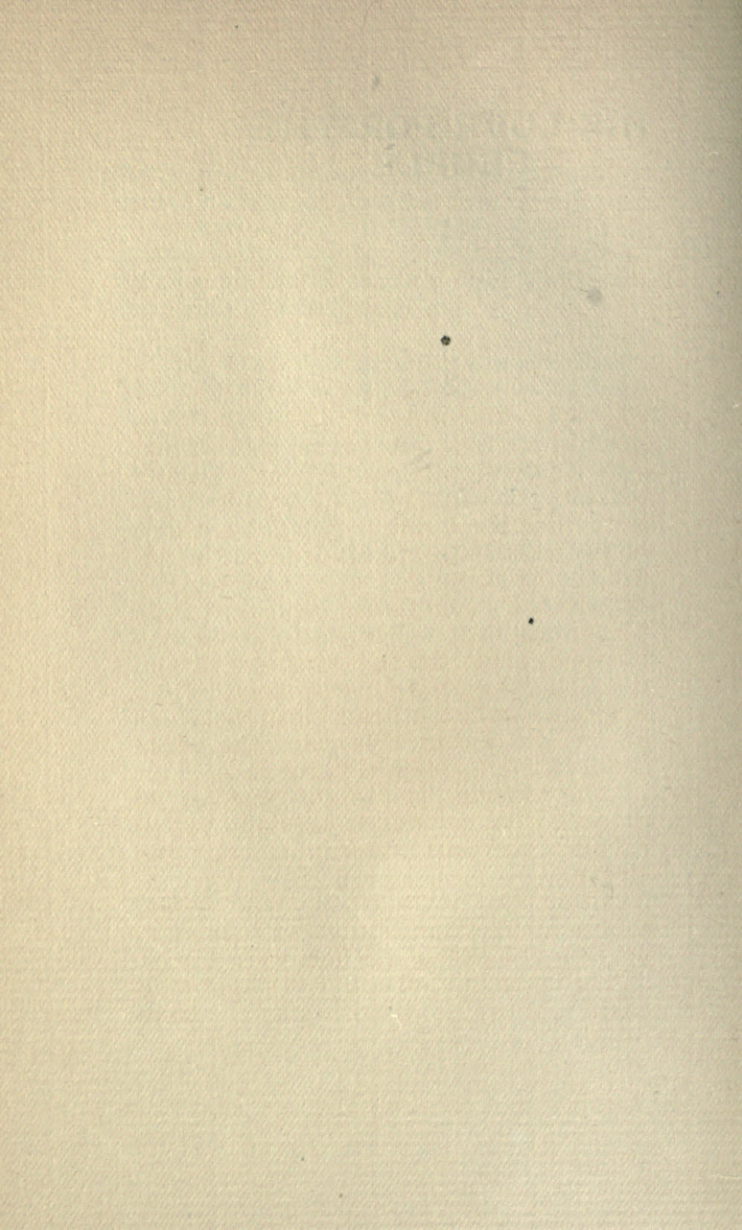
The next day two telegrams came to the Great Northern from a little Nebraska town.

Mrs. Ashley's read: "Arrived this morning. Made big business deal. Everything all right. Detained here. Love to you both."

Tad's read: "Bank foreclosed at noon to-day. Lost everything, but saved home. Keep dark to mother. Give her one good time till money runs out."

HIS LOVE FOR THE  
PEOPLE







## HIS LOVE FOR THE PEOPLE

### I

**A**S Thompson of Morris flung his long, lean arms awkwardly about and in his high, rasping voice poured out his bitter attack upon the University bill, Lanthorn of Warren County, author of the measure, arose from his seat and walked across the room to the reporter of the "Evening Star." He half rested one elbow against the top of the desk and with the thumb and first finger of his left hand rolled a dead cigar between his teeth. From this point he could observe the house full in the face.

The reporter pulled the bows of his glasses from behind his ears and began rubbing the lens vigorously upon his sleeve.

"The old boy's telling you a few things about your institution," he said, peering at Lanthorn in a way very near-sighted men have of doing. "You should  
have

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have the President down here. Thompson would entertain him, at least."

"Yes, Thompson has his steam up."

Lanthorn said no more. He stood quietly leaning against the desk, one hand thrust deeply into his trousers-pocket, his long frock coat thrown wide open. He noted the effect his opponent was making upon the house. The lobby and galleries were packed with spectators, silent, eagerly watching the scene before them. They were for the most part men, but here and there the bright red or yellow of a woman's hat broke the wall of black and white. On the floor a strange intensity of nervousness prevailed. Men were constantly leaving their seats and moving back and forth through the various aisles, or hurrying into the cloakrooms and out again. Some few were constantly jumping up and breaking the speaker's flood of fiery language by keen, sarcastic questions. Others were supporting him bravely, applauding vigorously at every sentiment of unusual vehemence. All was subdued, threatening, permeated with that strange, paralyzing hush that men experience just before a great battle or at the breaking of a great storm on the prairie.

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There were five or six men in the body who throughout the speaker's attack remained motionless, listening earnestly, but with an air of seeking knowledge rather than of taking sides in a partisan fight. These men Lanthorn watched narrowly. Every play of their features he noted and studied as carefully and searchingly as a gambler strives to read the face-masks of fellow-players, for these men constituted the unknown quantity in a problem that had filled Lanthorn's mind for days—the outcome of his University measure.

These five or six members were from the frontier portions of the state, "new timber" in the legislature, radical and more or less inflammable representatives of their party. They had been pulled back and forth by either faction and put to the test by every influence known to old and skillful leaders, but they still had remained neutral, had taken no stand. On their action rested the fate of the measure, and no two men understood so fully, so thoroughly the situation as Thompson of Morris and Lanthorn of Warren.

Thompson had sat in the House the session before, Lanthorn was entering his third term. In this legislature, which

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had convened but a few weeks, the two old parties were so evenly matched that the balance of power rested in the hands of the five or six men representing the new political faith. To the man who could bring those six into line with his own party and weld the whole into a solid, compact, powerful majority, would fall the leadership of the House, and that leadership carried with it a future.

"I brand this bill, then, Mr. Speaker," continued Thompson, whirling about and suddenly addressing the chair, "I brand this bill as a disgraceful plot on the part of the University authorities. In asking this increased levy these men, servants and representatives of a great commonwealth, are seeking to load another burden upon the shoulders of the people. I, for one, Mr. Speaker, am here to guard the interests of these very people—to guard those interests which the University authorities so easily forget—aye, so easily and readily turn to personal ends. I say this boldly, for to my mind there is no other motive for the vast accumulation of resource which this bill, if it becomes a law, will afford. I do not wish to stigmatize the Honorable Regents with this robbery



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of state's money. But I do say, with all the strength and with all the power which God Almighty has given me, that they have forgotten their trust, that they are led willy-nilly by one man, that they are blinded by false flattery and hypocritical pretensions of friendship from the lips of one who, a high-toned, fine-feathered aristocrat, coming out from the effete east with the idea that he is a shining light in the wilderness, pulls them about by their noses like dumb animals and leads them into providing soft berths and good salaries for a favored few who stand in with and bow down to the governing head as to an oriental potentate. My friends, you know the man. How great and mighty has he grown since lifted from black obscurity to commanding position! He is the head, the great and august head! His very acts are sacred, not to be beholden of common men, not to be exposed to the light of day. Bah! I say the University is but a stepping-stone to his ambitious designs. The people are the helpless puppets in his hands, the fools who pay the fiddler!

"I ask you, gentlemen, all of you, whether of one party or another, and especially I ask the gentlemen to whom  
this

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this legislature and these state institutions are new—I ask you, is this the man to stand at the head of a great and gloriously democratic institution like our own? What is there democratic about him? Does he ever mingle with the working-classes? Has he ever grasped the soil-stained but honest hand of a farmer in this state? Does he travel over the state as his predecessor was wont to do, seeking the people of all classes—farmers, merchants, mechanics—learning their ways, binding them into close and sympathetic touch with the crown of our educational system? No! Instead, he affects the monkish seclusion of the dark ages, shuts himself in his office wrapped in aristocratic dignity, contriving schemes and hatching plots, that his ambitious designs may be gratified. Yes, gentlemen, I have long waited for this opportunity; the time is ripe, the moment come, and this man I hold up as —”

“Mr. Speaker, point of order,” suddenly interrupted a fiery little Irishman with a red fat face and bristling side-whiskers. “I protest against this torrent of abuse and calumny, which is nothing but the vilest slander and a pack of lies. A man who spits forth  
such

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such—such rot should be branded with the word ‘liar’ in letters of fire.”

The words rang out sharp and clear. The Speaker of the House stood leaning over his long, dark desk, scarcely comprehending. Members, clerks, reporters, spectators were sitting and standing perfectly still in their places. There was perfect silence everywhere, strange and oppressive.

“You take that back!”

Washington of Morris had strode across the floor in an instant, and towered high above the Irishman, his face livid, perspiration standing from his forehead.

Suddenly the Speaker pounded his gavel violently upon the desk. There was confusion everywhere. Men of all parties and all beliefs suddenly formed about the two, pulling and pushing, swearing and yelling madly, a whirlpool of passion. Ladies in the galleries had arisen with the others and stood motionless, fascinated. A babel of clamor rose from the struggling, swaying mass. The reporters at their desks, never flurried, wrote rapidly.

The clock above the Speaker’s chair struck twelve, but only Lanthorn, leaning easily against the “Evening Star”  
desk,

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desk, heard it. Taking the cigar from his mouth, he threw it into a waste-paper basket. Then he walked rapidly down the aisle and pushed his way into the midst of the crowd.

"Stand back—get back there, Dennis!" he commanded, crowding the little Irishman to one side and coming face to face with Thompson.

"Now, Thompson, sit down!" He grasped his opponent by the arm and forced him into a chair. "Now, all of you let up on this infernal din." His voice was big and full and strong, and the confusion surged out to the edges of the crowd and died away. Then turning to the chair he said, "Mr. Speaker, I move that the Committee of the Whole do now arise and report progress and the University bill be made the first item of business for Monday morning."

Two representatives walked slowly down Capitol Hill toward their hotel.

"I'm going up to the University tomorrow morning," said one of them. "I want to look over the place and see for myself what kind of a man the President really is. Perhaps Thompson is right, after all."




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"I'll go with you, and we'll get some of the other boys—Steinway and Little. They are as much at sea as we are."

"Well, I'll 'phone him we're coming. It'll be a good way to put in part of the time. Saturday's always long to me."

## II

 HERE, Lewis, that's the last letter. We've cleared the basket rather quickly this morning, but in this legislative campaign there's no telling when we'll get at it again. You and William must do your best to thin out the pile. I wish we were all out of this thing, but the real trouble is just beginning. There is so much political complication up there, so many complications and so much personal feeling and so many stories about us down here, that it makes me sick. The University bill seems to be a football tossed about from party to party. But we will not give up until it is all over. Send the letter to Regent Stanton on the noon train. I want him at the Capitol the rest of the week."

The stenographer mechanically raised one shoulder quickly and gathered the answered letters into a pile. Closing his notebook, he arose and stood waiting, his loose shoulders slightly stooped.

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"Have William call up the boiler-house and tell them to turn on more steam. The chill and the gloom of the day makes this room cold, dark, and dismal as a vault."

The stenographer went out of the room noiselessly. The President of the University sat and gazed at the calendar-pad on the long office table before him. In the gray dull light of the winter morning he appeared pale and haggard and old. He was scarcely over middle-age, but the strain was telling upon him. The flesh was puffed slightly under his eyes, and long lines had grown into his forehead. He sat half-turned from the table, one arm hanging loosely over the side of the chair. With the fingers of the other he was drumming monotonously upon the blue blotter before him.

He raised his head and looked into an empty corner of the room, almost dark in the day's gloom.

"If the bill goes through," he had once said to the steward, "we must have a grate in that corner. A cheery, crackling fire leaping up before visitors who come in will put them at their ease and make them feel more at home. Perhaps it will dispel that icy, frigid air  
that

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that people must necessarily feel in the presence of one who is such an 'aristocrat,' and who 'is as cold and reserved as a medieval monk.' That is the way I am held up to the public; and perhaps a fireplace would help me out a little."

"Is that all the change you've planned for your office if we're successful?" the steward had asked, wonderingly.

"Yes, that's all. The office could stand some wall-paper, I think, and here and there a bit of furniture, but there are too many other crying needs for all the money we shall have this biennium. The chapel must be enlarged and Science Hall completely overhauled, and I want to see a stone walk laid to the main entrance this summer. The salaries and wages must be increased also to the full limit. We cannot ask our men to remain here any longer on under-pay and the long hours they have been giving generously for years. No, I will move along here for two more years just about as things are. But really, don't you think an open grate over there would cheer things up wonderfully?"

"Certainly," the steward had replied; "I think we'll have to put that in somehow



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somehow or other, whether the bill goes through or not."

From this dusky corner there now peered down at the President the marble features of his predecessor, the great man who years before had come to the University in its infancy and had brought it to a strong, commanding majority. This man had given his life for his work, and had handed on to the younger executive his great burden of crushing responsibilities. And so the present head had come out of the East, new, unknown, untried, differing from the old in many things, and had plunged into the throes of a legislative struggle. His work was to build up "The New University"—a University so broad and deep in spirit and purpose that none could see, even in vision, its completest consummation.

"You, sir," said the President, extending his open hand toward the bust above him—"you, sir, could have done it. Possessed of that rich experience of years, that sober judgment, that true and perfect discernment, you could have met all opposition magnanimously and stoutly and calmly swept it before you. You, my master, did battle in every form, you were put to the limit of human  
patience

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patience and endurance, you lived through every emotion of doubt and fear and despair, and you came off victorious by the magnificent faith and courage that inspired you. You were a giant among men, while I—”

The telephone bell ringing interrupted his apostrophe. He turned and drew the receiver to him.

“Yes—oh, good morning, Doctor; how are you? What’s that? Died last night—yes, yes—the mother—yes, I’ll remember—good-by!”

The President pressed a button beneath his table. A faint muffled buzzing sound came from the outer office, and in a few moments his secretary entered.

“William, Dr. Gordon has just called me over the telephone. That young German boy, Moellen, died last night. It must have been soon after I left him and sent the nurse. The body is at Corey’s, the undertaker’s, and it’s to be taken to the depot in half an hour and shipped home.”

The President ceased abruptly, rubbing the first and second fingers of his left hand across each other nervously and then stroking back the hair from his forehead.

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"William, I want you to go down to Corey's place and look after the mother. She's old, and the blow has almost crazed her. She was hysterical last night and would scarcely let me leave her. I ought to go. I wish I could, but a delegation of legislators is coming here at half-past ten to look over the University. I can't miss seeing them, can I? It's not a matter of myself, but the life of the University. You see how it is, don't you? It is altogether out of the question; don't you think so? You must arrange with some one in the office before you go to show these men in the moment they arrive. You know what they think of me. Well, we must meet them cordially. You make them as much at home as you can in such a dreary place on such a dismal day. Let them see just how we do things here. I wish it were brighter," and he glanced at the corner as if he expected the pleasant crackling flames of a great fire to meet his eye.

The young man waited quietly.

"Yes, you must go. Look after a carriage, get the tickets, and comfort her all you can. You must explain how I am held here — no, that wouldn't do. She wouldn't understand. Tell her —

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no, just leave orders not to keep the representatives waiting. You will have to go soon."

The young man went out. The President sat motionless gazing at the bust above him. Gradually a tenderness came into his eyes and he fell to rubbing his two fingers together again. Outside the wind whistled shrilly about the corners and swirled the snow sharply against the panes. A distant shout sounded from the campus and in some upper hall of the building a bell rang faintly. Heavy feet shuffled along the hallway stamping off the snow. The cheap little clock above the bookcase ticked louder and louder.

The President arose suddenly, and going to the closet in the corner pulled himself into his heavy brown ulster, his overshoes, and his gloves. Taking his hat in his hand, he walked rapidly into the outer office. The young man was just drawing down the cover of his desk.

"William, I've changed my mind. I'm going to the depot with the mother myself. The members of the House will be here in fifteen minutes, and I'll try and get back in half an hour. Hold them



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them until I return if you can. If you can't, why —"

"Shall I call a carriage? There will be time."

"No; I want to get out into the storm — I feel like facing it."

### III



THE long, narrow, ill-ventilated waiting-room of the station was crowded. Three Russian women with the kerchief headgear and somber black garments of the Old Country peasants were settled in one corner, barracked by great baskets and bundles and dirty children pulling stolidly at each other's stringy hair. About a radiator in the center of the room were grouped a company of traveling players. The rakish-dressed leading-lady, wearing two heavy chatelaines and a large bunch of artificial violets, had her head drawn close to a long-haired, Roman-beaked actor in a tall hat long unironed.

"Nice-looking old fellow—that over there," she said, rattling away after the manner of their kind, and nodding across the room; "the one with his hat in his hand. Looks like he might be a well-to-do banker."

"Banker's good—more like a preacher chap—knowing old boy, too—but,  
146 Lord,

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Lord, that shriveled-up blackbird with him—not of his congregation, my Fiorentina, never—too pungent an odor of ‘low Dutch’ there—smearcase and kraut, washtubs and soft soap. Ugh, I smell it now. I would we seek a change of atmosphere.”

The man with his hat in his hand stood talking earnestly to the woman in faded black, who sat disconsolately clasping her coarse hard hands tightly in her lap. From beneath her rusty bonnet her face looked out thin and drawn with grief. Her lips were tight closed and with dull, dry eyes she gazed vacantly toward the blank wall.

“I have sent a telegram to your husband,” the man was saying, “and he will be there to meet you. You must not worry at all, for I will give the conductor the tickets and he will look after everything. I wish I were going with you, to help and comfort you, but I know you will be brave—as brave as you were last night. Your husband will need you all the more now. You will comfort him—make it easier for him. You two will be dearer to each other now.”

The door opened and a cold blast of wind ran through the room, sending a shiver over those within. The hoarse  
whistle

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whistle of an approaching train sounded on the frosty air. The waiting travelers began to gather their parcels, to button their coats, and crowd toward the door. The woman in black sat helplessly staring at the wall, motionless, tearless. "Come," said the man, simply. He took her little worn leather valise in one hand and with the other gently helped her to arise.

She stared at him vacantly, and let him lead her through the crowded room and out upon the station platform. The north wind beat across the open space and whipped the frozen snow sharply into their faces. The man quickly changed so as to shield her fully with his body and heavy coat. She let him draw her close and slowly lead her into the train. As they walked down the aisle a little child sucking a piece of candy held out its sticky hand, touched his coat, and smiled up at them. The man smiled back, and the woman's eyes brightened momentarily, then became apathetic again.

He found a seat for her near the center of the car, placed the little valise at her feet, and calling the porter had him close the ventilator above and then bring a pillow. This he arranged for  
her



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her himself, patting it down and smoothing it back, and then forced her to take off her bonnet and lean back upon the cushion.

"You must sleep during the ride," he said. She closed her eyes wearily. "You must not worry, but try to rest, or you will be sick yourself. I must leave you now, but when you see your husband and everything is over, tell him that Will was a good boy and was growing into a noble Christian man. Both of you will always be proud and glad to have had such a son."

There was the warning sound of escaping steam and a bell ringing somewhere ahead. The train began to move slowly, and then the woman suddenly sat up erect and clutched his hand convulsively.

"Oh, my boy, my boy, my boy!" and tears, the first tears since the death, streamed down her face and spotted her faded dress.

"God bless you!" he said, hoarsely, and freeing himself walked rapidly toward the door. A large, heavy man standing in the aisle, who had been watching the two, made as if to detain him. But the hurrying man did not see, and passing out swung loose from the

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train and faced the storm back to the University.

As the President entered the outer office, his coat and hair and hat powdered with clinging snow, his ears and cheeks fiery red with the cold, the committee had just come out from the inner room, followed by the President's secretary, vainly attempting to stay them.

"He would have been back before this, dead boy or no dead boy. The train left half an hour ago. The story sounds like bosh—a dodge to avoid us. He don't want to see us."

The speaker was a short man, with thick, curly hair, a bulldog mouth and chin and small bright eyes. He slapped his leg with his hat repeatedly while talking. His companions were buttoning their overcoats and rolling up their trousers.

"Good morning, gentlemen," said the President, throwing back his ulster collar and shaking the snow about him. "Come in a moment and I will explain."


"Oh, some other time for that," said the little man, coldly. "We're sorry, of course, but we had another important engagement at eleven. Come on."

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"But I think you will hear me," said the President, slowly.

The last of the six had passed out of the office and were walking heavily down the hall. The President entered the inner room without a word and closed the door quietly.

#### IV

HE storm of Saturday had so delayed the movement of the little legislative world that it was two o'clock on Monday afternoon before there was a quorum in the lower house and business began. The gray clouds that still hung pall-like over the earth had so darkened the chamber that all the gas-jets were lighted and cast sickly yellow shadows across the walls. Above the Speaker's chair the American flag flapped gently in the wind which whistled low through a crevice of the window.

The body at once went into the committee of the whole and the University bill came up again as the special order.

Inside the Speaker's private office a little group of men were gathered about a green cloth-covered table, silent, waiting. A tall, awkward man with a boyish face stiffly clad in a tight suit leaned far over the table checking the roll of the house.

"With four of them we can just make it,"

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it," he said, looking up eagerly; "Larkins, Walten and Steinway and Lollard. They seemed to be half-persuaded last week."

"Have you or Lanthorn talked with any of them since Friday—Larkins or Lollard especially? The other two follow them." It was Stanton who spoke, the regent who had been summoned so hurriedly by the President the Saturday before. As he talked he drew faces on his thumb-nail with a fountain-pen, drawing one, rubbing it clean on a blotter, picturing another.

"No, I couldn't find them," replied the young man, the resident regent; "and Lanthorn went down home over Sunday. He only returned this noon and could not have seen them. I'm sure of that."

"Gentlemen, I think we can count them out." It was the President who spoke, slowly and distinctly. "They all came up to the University Saturday. I was called away suddenly and urgently and when I returned they were just leaving. They would not let me explain. You know the things that have been said—the stories that have gone around. In view of all that and Thompson's speech and their reception at the University



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versity we might just as well cross them off the list."

All were silent, gazing intently at the long, narrow strip of paper containing the columns of names. The steam hissed low from the radiator's escape-valve. A few flakes of frozen snow beat against the pane. A sound of cheering came from the outer chamber.

"Let us call Lanthorn in," suggested the President, "and have his opinion of the situation."

The man with the boyish face arose and went out. He was gone fifteen minutes, while the others waited patiently, silently.

"Lanthorn can't come now," he reported on returning. "He's answering Lollard, who just finished. Attacked you much as Thompson did Friday, pitching into you principally for not being there Saturday. He called you a cloister-seeking recluse and pictured you as a hermit, loving solitude, and turning your face in disgust and loathing from the common world and beating back the multitude with your outstretched palm. He predicted your fall—and a lot of other rot."

"And Lanthorn is answering him?" asked Stanton.

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"Yes, he was when I came in. Judge Tarball stopped me a moment at the door to tell me to cheer up. He said in his breezy way that Lanthorn always won—was a regular thoroughbred, you know, my boy. But come, let's go out and hear him."

The three arose and walked through the narrow passage into the legislative chamber and stood near the end of the lobby. Lanthorn was just finishing, and it was plain to see that he had held his hearers. The Speaker leaned forward out of his great leather chair, the flag drooping in full folds about him. Some of the members still held newspapers in their hands, but were not reading them. The pages had ceased to quarrel among themselves near the lobby. Silence had fallen upon the galleries.

"Mr. Speaker and gentlemen of this body: I have told you the story simply and truly, for I happened to be on the train and to see it all. A man who has the heart and the soul to do a thing like that little deed of kindness for a poor bereaved mother, friendless and alone in the city, is not the man my friend, the gentleman from Washington, or my friend, the gentleman from Frontier County, has represented. He is the  
man

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man we want in this state of ours, the man we want at the head of its great educational system, the man to whom we can safely and willingly send our boys and girls in perfect trust and confidence."

The silence continued as Lanthorn concluded and took his seat. It was a heavy stillness—the hush of strained anxiety. A chair creaked once grindingly and the ticking of the clock sounded distinctly across the room.

"Question," the fiery little Irishman called suddenly and broke the quiet. Then the usual confusion arose again as members leaned across to talk with one another, ruffled papers or turned noisily in their swinging chairs. The vote was taken.

"The chair is in doubt," said the Speaker. "The house will stand and be counted."

Silence settled down again as the clerk counted those standing in the affirmative. The regent with the boyish face had climbed to a chair and was also counting them. Stanton's gaze wandered nervously over the house. The President stood a little behind the others, his arms folded, his eyes closed. The steward of the University, stand-  
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ing in the lobby, had seen them enter, and coming across now stood behind the President.

"There's Larkins up, and, by Jove, there's Steinway," said Stanton, "but I don't see Lollard."

"He's getting up now," said the regent on the chair, excitedly. "That fixes it—that does it."

"Mr. Speaker," said Lollard, slowly, "I want to explain my vote. I was pretty hot under the collar Saturday, and I hadn't got over it this morning when I made that speech. I didn't understand and I want to do the fair and square thing. I take back what I said this morning and stand with the ayes."

A deafening applause rang out through the hall from the friends of the measure, and a second one when the vote was finally announced. Lanthorn had arisen and walked to the desk of the "Evening Star," where he stood calmly rolling an unlighted cigar between his lips. Members began to press about him. From the opposite wall the President, the two regents and the steward fixed their eyes upon him, attempting to draw his gaze.

"I told you he was a winner," said Judge Tarbell, approaching the group  
and

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and endeavoring to shake the hands of all of them at once. "I told you. He comes from Kentucky. Bridle and bit can't hold him when the blood's in his eye and the bit in his teeth."

"We'll have the fireplace now," suggested the steward, thoughtfully.

"Thank you," replied the President, smiling kindly; "and then I will invite them all up again."

"We must go and shake hands with him," said the President; "that is, if we can get through the crowd."



**"CHERRYBEAK"**  
**STEWART,**  
**BARNACLE**





## “CHERRYBEAK” STEW- ART, BARNACLE

**L**OVALL and I, dead tired and dusty from the Midway, sat beside the lagoon with our feet stretched against the iron railing before us and listened to the Mexican band playing beneath the lights of the Government building. A man came down the steep bridge-approach, and as he stopped for a moment under the electric light he took off his hat and threw back his head to catch the breeze from the water. His clothes were brown and of average gentility. One noticed that about him, and then the man's nose attracted all attention, for it was long and thin and, even in the white electric light, brightly red.

“Why, there's ‘Cherrybeak’ Stewart!” exclaimed Lovall. “Hey, you there, you ‘Cherrybeak’ — well, I am glad to see you! Where have you been all these years? Everybody down home thought you were dead.”

## “CHERRYBEAK”

“Yes,” replied the man; “I left the town a good many years ago, and I’ve wandered round a good deal since Ed died. I’m working now, though, down in the packing-houses—and I ain’t missed a working-day in three years. Kind o’ surprise Ed if he was living, would n’t it; but I owe it all to him. Poor old Ed. Good enough to be a preacher of the Gospel, Ed was, even if he could beat us all a swearing when he had to. I ain’t been really happy since he died. I’d give everything to be back in the office, smoking his old cob pipe, with my feet on the table and Ed on the other side, just to hear him cuss.”

The man stopped and put on his hat.

“Gawd, but it’s hot!” he said, and left us. Lovall watched him silently.

“Say, how about that name?” I asked. “Who named him ‘Cherry-beak?’ It’s superb?”

“Turner did that,” Lovall answered. “You don’t remember him? He ran ‘The Times’ before you came. He was a strong man and fearless as could be. Somehow he inspired in this man Stewart the greatest admiration. He gave Stewart a little job in the office one day, and from that he could not rid himself of the fellow. He made the office his  
home,

## “CHERRYBEAK”

home, and worked only enough to get his meals and beer. Turner called him ‘Cherrybeak,’ and once he tried to get rid of the man. Want to hear about it?”

And sitting there with our legs outstretched and our hats on our knees Lovall told me this thing about the editor and his admirer.

It was one Wednesday afternoon that “Cherrybeak” rode up to the Center Creek Settlement to visit with an old friend over Sunday. He was induced to do this the more readily since there was to be a country horse-race on Saturday, with plenty of refreshments to add zest to the occasion. On Friday afternoon “The Times” was already locked in the forms and the “devil” was inking up the rollers and oiling the “arm” of the old Washington hand-press. Turner sat with his chair against the desk, which was heaped high with exchanges, proof-sheets and government reports. His thin, sharp knees were drawn close to his chin, his hands clasped tight about them, and he gazed absently into the smoldering bowl of his pipe.

Suddenly his chair came down to the floor with a great clattering noise and



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he arose erect with the smile of a great plan lighting up his face.

“Hold on there,” he called to the foreman. “Hold her over fifteen minutes. I have got something else to go in. I nearly forgot.”

Turner walked over to the desk, pushed a space clear with both arms like a man swimming, wrote rapidly for a few moments and then handed the slip of yellow paper to the foreman, who read it over, smiled, and looked at the other quickly.

“Aw, now, Ed, what kind of guff are you givin’ us here?”

“Dead certain truth, so help me! Go ’long and run it in a prominent place—near the top of the first local column.”

The next morning when the paper appeared the public read a strange obituary notice, with heavy black lines at top and bottom.

## DIED

“Some time during the past week, William Stewart, commonly known as ‘Cherrybeak Bill.’ ‘The Times’ is unable to give the particulars, as we have just stopped the press to notice his death.

## “CHERRYBEAK”

death. But we hope to give further information in our next issue. Stewart in some ways was unique. While not a public man to any great extent, he was very well known in this vicinity. With all his faults he was a pretty good fellow, faithful to the last, even in small things, and by some people here he will be greatly missed. Stewart had no immediate relatives, as far as we have been able to ascertain, but it is safe to say that the whole community, especially the business men of the place, will feel his loss.”

The town read the notice and was puzzled.

“Strange,” said one; “I had not heard he was sick. I wonder what was wrong. Perhaps he tackled a job of work and couldn’t stand up under the strain. Ed don’t seem to be long on particulars.”

“Well,” said another, “I’ll bet my last dollar Pete Shelly shut down on him and there wasn’t any place where he could get a drink.”

“He was very much alive Tuesday night when he held me up for the beer. But Turner ought to know if anybody does, as much as if he were his own brother.

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brother. I say, let's go down and ask him about it. There is plenty of time to feel bad over it between now and the funeral.”

The women of the town talked it over at the sewing society. They remarked at “the merciless dispensation of Providence toward the transgressor,” and pointed out how it ought to be a lesson to the young that every preacher should employ on the morrow. They discussed the funeral, where it would be held, who would preach the sermon, and who possibly could be found to act as pall-bearers. They talked Stewart's religious experiences up one side and down the other. Two years before he had been taken in on probation by the Methodists, but he slid back to the world and the ways thereof as soon as the winter's hurrah was over and the praying sisters' arms were lifted from his neck. The next winter he was a shining light in the great Baptist revival, but when they refused to baptize him right away, he went off and drowned his sorrow with a big drunk; then he took a turn with the “Shouters,” straightened up for a few days and became a new man, but as ever finally drifted back to the printing-office and the

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the editorial tobacco-can. All this the women told each other.

All afternoon, too, people came into the printing-office and questioned Turner.

“Of course I don’t know for certain, nor I haven’t heard anybody say so. I just feel it—more from something ‘Cherrybeak’ said himself last week. It’s a case of mysterious disappearance. He has been gone half a week now, and from what I know of ‘Cherrybeak’ I feel that that is as good as death. I ought to know, hadn’t I? Yet you can’t rely on ‘Cherrybeak.’ He sometimes does the most surprising and extraordinary things. Now just as we are getting accustomed to his becoming an angel, and picturing him with wings and all that sort of thing, he is likely to turn up and spoil the whole effect. Just like Bill exactly.

“Yes, ‘Cherrybeak’ used to bother me almost to death. I felt kind of sorry for the poor duffer, and let him up here one day to ink the press when the boy was sick. That was where I was an idiot. He was like the proverbial camel. He got in and I could n’t kick the poor devil out in the street. I abused him, and swore at him, and almost drove  
him

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him out like a dog. Say, just pass that tobacco, will you, please. It has lasted some since ‘Cherrybeak’ was taken off—yes, sir, like a dog, but back he always came with the same bright, sweet smile, making up to me and trying to be good, you know, and to make me happy. Now, you might think it was religion, but it wasn’t. It was just his make-up—that and beer. He gave me a sort of heathen worship, and the more beer he had in him the worse he became, and the closer he stuck to me. Once in a while, you know, they pull a ship into dry dock and scrape off the barnacles. That was me exactly. I used to feel that I needed to be scraped. Bill was my barnacle, and I used to say I would give a life subscription to ‘The Times’ to the man that got him off me. Now Bill’s gone, and perhaps in a day or two somebody will come around and claim that subscription.”

On Monday morning ‘Cherrybeak’ Stewart drove up to the saloon, jumped to the platform and walked into the place and up to the bar grandly. “Beer for the crowd,” he said, with a flourish. “Step up, boys; it’s on me. I won two dollars on the race Saturday. Why, what



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what the devil's wrong with all you fellows?"

"Oh, nothing," answered the bar-keeper, hastily. "Here you are. Coming, Bill."

The drinkers eyed him curiously over the rims of their glasses. When they had drained the liquor, a big man in a leather coat and a gray slouch-hat went across to the window and took up the last weekly "Times." He folded it inside out and silently held it before the mystified Stewart. Stewart read it through, and then looked at the crowd in bewilderment. They gazed at him with the stolid stare of rough men of the West, for such is their sense of humor. He read it a second time.

"It's a lie!" he suddenly burst out, and they all smiled. Then he read it a third time.

"Now, boys, that ain't right, is it?" he asked, appealingly. "That ain't right in Ed, is it? Now, is it?"

"It's an outrage," answered one of the men, spurring Stewart on. "Ed ought to make reparation. If I were you, I'd make him apologize and beg forgiveness and give you a steady job."

"Oh, he ought to make you his partner,"

## “CHERRYBEAK”

ner,” said another. “That would square things, wouldn’t it?”

Thus worked upon by his friends, Stewart, turning, went out of the saloon with the paper still in his hand. He walked up the deserted little street and climbed the stairs to the newspaper office. The crowd from the saloon followed him, gradually increasing as it proceeded. When Stewart entered the office they hung back about the door, peering over each other’s shoulders into the disordered room filled with press, cases of type, and bundles of papers.

Turner in his shirt-sleeves wheeled about from his desk, and running his hand across his hair faced “Cherrybeak” Stewart.

“What, you! Why, great heavens, Bill! How you startled me! Where did you come from? Sit down there,” pushing him into a chair. “Not dead; well that’s too bad. Everybody thought you were, and there has been some great betting going on about it this week. No, not a word! Here is the tobacco—help yourself; and there’s the pipe. What’s this you have in your hand? Oh, that notice! How did you like it? Isn’t it fine? Doesn’t it read well? Just listen to this: The whole community—  
yes,

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yes, yes—feels his loss. Did you know that, William? the whole community! You don't like it? Now, Bill, after all my pains with it. You want me to take it back; well—yes—I guess I can—of course—of course. I'll fix it. I'll say you decided not to, had made other arrangements. Yes, yes, I'll do the right thing. Count on Ed Turner for that. Only for God's sake get out of here and don't show up until it's done. To do it right I must have it quiet here. I'll take it all back, but you've got to clean out of here and stay out a week. That's what you get for fooling me this way. Now, gentlemen, there's the door. This interview is ended for to-day.”

The crowd cleared out, taking Stewart, who still held the paper, with them. They went on down to the saloon, but “Cherrybeak” soon returned, and sat down on the high sidewalk opposite the printing-office, swinging his feet disconsolately and gazing fondly up at the moving forms within. All the week he sat there awaiting the apology. On Friday it appeared.

# “CHERRYBEAK”

## AN EXPLANATION

“In last week’s issue we stated that William Stewart was dead. It appears that we were mistaken, for ‘Cherrybeak’ has been to see us, and asserts positively that he is not dead and never has been. In justice to ourselves, we must state the reason for our belief as to his demise. For over a year Stewart has owed us sundry sums of borrowed money. Two weeks ago he solemnly promised on all that was good and sacred that he would come in and pay us on Thursday if he were alive. He did not show up on the promised day, and in fact disappeared twenty-four hours before Thursday. Naturally, we reached the conclusion that he was dead, after what he had told us. As Stewart claims we were wrong and demands an explanation, we gladly make this correction, acknowledge with regret our mistake, and announce that he is still alive.”

That evening the office-boy taking the papers to the postoffice handed one to the man who sat on the sidewalk opposite, despondently swinging his feet.



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feet. It was just light enough for the man to read the explanation twice. He then arose quickly and walked straight across the street and mounted the stairs that led to the printing-office.

The usual evening game of seven-up between Turner, the foreman, the young lawyer of the town and the fat grain-man was in progress across the editorial desk now cleared of its débris, when Stewart burst into the room and began to pour forth his thanks for such a noble act. Turner arose, looked at the others helplessly and then turned to “Cherrybeak.”

“Now, Bill, not another word. Here, take this dollar and celebrate—and don’t come back here till Christmas.” Tears came into the eyes of the barnacle as the editor pushed him out of the room.

An hour later strange noises broke the stillness of the summer night that had settled over the little town. Shouts and yells came up from the street below, and above the uproar Turner heard some one loudly defending his own name against some unknown traducer and proclaiming rather incoherently his own great and good qualities. Turner, shuffling the cards, stopped to listen.



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“Wait a moment,” he said. He took up his hat and went out. Ten minutes passed, and then the men heard him returning, but roughly guiding some one up the stairs.

“Drunk as a lord, of course, you fool! Steady there. Ah, get up there now. Here you are.”

The men saw the editor turn into his bedroom adjoining his office and tip the other onto the bed.

Turner straightened out the other's feet, and then walking across the room took an old overcoat from a nail in the wall and threw it gently over the man, who had sunk at once into a dead sleep.

“Suppose this means my paying for a room at the hotel to-night,” came half-audibly through the open door of the sleeping-room. Turner had raised the window, and now came out where the game was waiting. He locked the door behind him and sat down.

“It's your deal, Jim,” he said to the foreman.

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